THE WORKS OF FRANCIS THOMPSON

PROSE: VOLUME III

Lily B. Campbell

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VOLUME III: PROSE

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Francis Thompson

From a drawing by Everard Meynell
May 1903

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FRANCIS THOMPSON
VOLUME III: PROSE

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THE CONTENTS

The Literary Executor's Preface	*Page* xiii
The Author's Motto and Invocation	xv
Shelley	1
Paganism Old and New	38
In Darkest England	52
The Fourth Order of Humanity	66
Form and Formalism	71
Nature's Immortality	78
Sanctity and Song	89
Don Quixote	93
The Way of Imperfection	97
A Renegade Poet on the Poet	105
Moestitiae Encomium	110
Finis Coronat Opus	116
The Poets' Poet	140
Sidney's Prose	147
Shakespeare's Prose	153
Ben Jonson's Prose	159
Seventeenth Century Prose	164
Goldsmith's Prose	170
Crashaw	175
Coleridge	181
Bacon	190
Milton	195
Pope	203
James Thomson	209
Thomas De Quincey	215

CONTENTS

Macaulay	222
Emerson	231
Dante	238
The Nibelungen Lied	245
Health and Holiness	249
Notes	283

The Preface by Francis Thompson's Literary Executor

IF Francis Thompson's concern for the Prose of Poets is the Reader's too, this volume carries its own proper passport on its title-page. Of this Poet's prose, his *Shelley* Essay stands first among even his own writings. Yet the same ease with which he turns one of its passages of imagery into verse for *An Anthem of Earth* is equally evident in the case of other essays and other poems : a sign of a general closer kinship than is common between the less and the more imaginative modes of expression.

Poetry and Prose he began to write simultaneously. His *Paganism Old and New* (composed before he left the London streets, as one of its allusions betrays) was sent in the same envelope as his *Dream Tryst* to the office of the magazine which produced them ; and the *Shelley* Essay and *The Hound of Heaven* were contemporaries—one could say twins. But whereas his Poetry was written, at intervals, almost wholly during the decade of years 1888 to 1897, he continued to write Prose, if a little fitfully, during the remaining decade of his life. To the earlier period belong the imaginative papers : such as the *Moestitiae Encomium*, written when he had been reading Blake and De Quincey, his ' very own Thomas De Quincey ' ; and the *Finis Coronat Opus*, a fantasia which he might appropriately have produced in competition with Mary Shelley, but one which, for all its artificiality, and its hardly hidden

irony, has hints of that slaying of domesticities which went to his own making of ' a poet out of a man.'

Later his literary criticisms had a friendly welcome in several quarters, notably in *The Academy*, under Charles Lewis Hind, and in *The Athenæum*, first under Norman Maccoll and finally under Vernon Rendall. The reprinting of such articles and reviews, written in haste, must be something of a hazardous adventure. But I am fortified in making it by the fact that he himself projected a Prose volume ; appointing for it some of the articles here printed, and even formally correcting them for the Press. And if my choice, where left unaided, is a faulty one, I know that the very failures and unexpectednesses of a man of genius serve a sound purpose, though a biographical, rather than a literary one.

W.M.

May 1913.

MOTTO & INVOCATION

OMNIA PER IPSUM, ET SINE IPSO NIHIL

St John's Gospel, chap. 1, *v.* 3, *abbreviated.*

PARDON, O Saint John Divine,
That I change a word of thee—
None the less, aid thou me !
And Siena's Catharine !
Lofty Doctor, Augustine,
Glorious penitent ! And be
Assisi's Francis also mine !
Mine be Padua's Anthony :
And that other Francis, he
Called of Sales ! Let all combine
To counsel (of great charity)
What I write ! Thy wings incline,
Ah, my Angel, o'er the line !
Last and first, O Queen Mary,
Of thy white Immaculacy,
If my work may profit aught,
Fill with lilies every thought !
I surmise
What is white will then be wise.

To which I add : Thomas More,
Teach (thereof my need is sore)
What thou showedst well on earth—
Good writ, good wit, make goodly mirth !

F.T.

SHELLEY

THE Church, which was once the mother of poets no less than of saints, during the last two centuries has relinquished to aliens the chief glories of poetry, if the chief glories of holiness she has preserved for her own. The palm and the laurel, Dominic and Dante, sanctity and song, grew together in her soil: she has retained the palm, but forgone the laurel. Poetry in its widest sense,* and when not professedly irreligious, has been too much and too long either misprised or distrusted; too much and too generally the feeling has been that it is at best superfluous, at worst pernicious, most often dangerous. Once poetry was, as she should be, the lesser sister and helpmate of the Church; the minister to the mind, as the Church to the soul. But poetry sinned, poetry fell; and, in place of lovingly reclaiming her, Catholicism cast her from the door to follow the feet of her pagan seducer. The separation has been ill for poetry; it has not been well for religion.

Fathers of the Church (we would say), pastors of the Church, pious laics of the Church: you are taking from its walls the panoply of Aquinas; take also from its walls the psaltery of Alighieri. Unrol the precedents of the Church's past; recall to your minds that Francis of Assisi was among the precursors of Dante; that sworn to

* That is to say, taken as the general animating spirit of the Fine Arts.

Poverty he forswore not Beauty, but discerned through the lamp Beauty the Light God ; that he was even more a poet in his miracles than in his melody ; that poetry clung round the cowls of his Order. Follow his footsteps ; you who have blessings for men, have you no blessing for the birds ? Recall to your memory that, in their minor kind, the love poems of Dante shed no less honour on Catholicism than did the great religious poem which is itself pivoted on love ; that in singing of heaven he sang of Beatrice—this supporting angel was still carven on his harp even when he stirred its strings in Paradise. What you theoretically know, vividly realize : that with many the religion of beauty must always be a passion and a power, that it is only evil when divorced from the worship of the Primal Beauty. Poetry is the preacher to men of the earthly as you of the Heavenly Fairness ; of that earthly fairness which God has fashioned to His own image and likeness. You proclaim the day which the Lord has made, and she exults and rejoices in it. You praise the Creator for His works, and she shows you that they are very good. Beware how you misprise this potent ally, for hers is the art of Giotto and Dante : beware how you misprise this insidious foe, for hers is the art of modern France and of Byron. Her value, if you know it not, God knows, and know the enemies of God. If you have no room for her beneath the wings of the Holy One, there is place for her beneath the webs of the

Evil One : whom you discard, he embraces ; whom you cast down from an honourable seat, he will advance to a haughty throne ; the brows you dislaurel of a just respect, he will bind with baleful splendours ; the stone which you builders reject, he will make his head of the corner. May she not prophesy in the temple ? then there is ready for her the tripod of Delphi. Eye her not askance if she seldom sing directly of religion : the bird gives glory to God though it sings only of its innocent loves. Suspicion creates its own cause ; distrust begets reason for distrust. This beautiful, wild, feline poetry, wild because left to range the wilds, restore to the hearth of your charity, shelter under the rafter of your Faith ; discipline her to the sweet restraints of your household, feed her with the meat from your table, soften her with the amity of your children ; tame her, fondle her, cherish her—you will no longer then need to flee her. Suffer her to wanton, suffer her to play, so she play round the foot of the Cross !

There is a change of late years : the Wanderer is being called to her Father's house, but we would have the call yet louder, we would have the proffered welcome more unstinted. There are still stray remnants of the old intolerant distrust. It is still possible for even a French historian of the Church to enumerate among the articles cast upon Savonarola's famous pile, *poésies érotiques, tant des anciens que des modernes, livres impies ou corrupteurs, Ovide,*

Tibulle, Properce, pour ne nommer que les plus connus, Dante, Pétrarque, Boccace, tous ces auteurs Italiens qui déjà souillaient les âmes et ruinaient les mœurs, en créant ou perfectionnant la langue. Blameworthy carelessness, at the least, which can class the *Vita Nuova* with the *Ars Amandi* and the *Decameron!* With few exceptions, whatsoever in our best poets is great and good to the non-Catholic, is great and good also to the Catholic; and though Faber threw his edition of Shelley into the fire and never regretted the act; though, moreover, Shelley is so little read among us that we can still tolerate in our churches the religious parody which Faber should have thrown after his three-volumed Shelley;*—in spite of this, we are not disposed to number among such exceptions that straying spirit of light.

We have among us at the present day no lineal descendant, in the poetical order, of Shelley; and any such offspring of the abundingly spontaneous Shelley is hardly possible, still less likely, on account of the defect by which (we think) contemporary poetry in general, as compared with the poetry of the early nineteenth century, is mildewed. That defect is the predominance of art over inspiration, of body over soul. We do not say the *defect* of inspiration. The warrior is there, but he is hampered by his armour. Writers of high aim in

* The hymn, 'I rise from dreams of time.'

all branches of literature, even when they are not—as Mr Swinburne, for instance, is—lavish in expression, are generally over-deliberate in expression. Mr Henry James, delineating a fictitious writer clearly intended to be the ideal of an artist, makes him regret that he has sometimes allowed himself to take the second-best word instead of searching for the best. Theoretically, of course, one ought always to try for the best word. But practically, the habit of excessive care in word-selection frequently results in loss of spontaneity ; and, still worse, the habit of always taking the best word too easily becomes the habit of always taking the most ornate word, the word most removed from ordinary speech. In consequence of this, poetic diction has become latterly a kaleidoscope, and one's chief curiosity is as to the precise combinations into which the pieces will be shifted. There is, in fact, a certain band of words, the Prætorian cohorts of poetry, whose prescriptive aid is invoked by every aspirant to the poetical purple, and without whose prescriptive aid none dares aspire to the poetical purple ; against these it is time some banner should be raised. Perhaps it is almost impossible for a contemporary writer quite to evade the services of the free-lances whom one encounters under so many standards.* But it is at any rate curious to note

* We are a little surprised at the fact, because so many Victorian poets are, or have been, prose-writers as well. Now, according to our theory, the practice of prose should main-

that the literary revolution against the despotic diction of Pope seems issuing, like political revolutions, in a despotism of its own making.

This, then, we cannot but think, distinguishes the literary period of Shelley from our own. It distinguishes even the unquestionable treasures and masterpieces of to-day from similar treasures and masterpieces of the precedent day; even *The Lotus-Eaters* from *Kubla Khan;* even Rossetti's ballads from *Christabel.* It is present in the restraint of Matthew Arnold no less than in the exuberance of Swinburne, and affects our writers who aim at simplicity no less than those who seek richness. Indeed, nothing is so artificial as our simplicity. It is the simplicity of the French stage *ingénue.* We are self-conscious to the finger-tips; and this inherent quality, entailing on our poetry the inevitable loss of spontaneity, ensures that whatever poets, of whatever excellence, may be born to us from the Shelleian stock, its founder's spirit can take among us no reincarnation. An age that is ceasing to produce child-like children cannot

tain fresh and comprehensive a poet's diction, should save him from falling into the hands of an exclusive coterie of poetic words. It should react upon his metrical vocabulary to its beneficial expansion, by taking him outside his aristocratic circle of language, and keeping him in touch with the great commonalty, the proletariat of speech. For it is with words as with men: constant intermarriage within the limits of a patrician clan begets effete refinement; and to reinvigorate the stock, its veins must be replenished from hardy plebeian blood.

produce a Shelley. For both as poet and man he was essentially a child.

Yet, just as in the effete French society before the Revolution the Queen played at Arcadia, the King played at being a mechanic, every one played at simplicity and universal philanthropy, leaving for most durable outcome of their philanthropy the guillotine, as the most durable outcome of ours may be execution by electricity ;—so in our own society the talk of benevolence and the cult of childhood are the very fashion of the hour. We, of this self-conscious, incredulous generation, sentimentalize our children, analyse our children, think we are endowed with a special capacity to sympathize and identify ourselves with children ; we play at being children. And the result is that we are not more child-like, but our children are less child-like. It is so tiring to stoop to the child, so much easier to lift the child up to you. Know you what it is to be a child ? It is to be something very different from the man of to-day. It is to have a spirit yet streaming from the waters of baptism ; it is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief ; it is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper in your ear ; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness, and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy godmother in its own soul ; it is to live in a nutshell and to count yourself the king of infinite space ; it is

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour ;

it is to know not as yet that you are under sentence of life, nor petition that it be commuted into death. When we become conscious in dreaming that we dream, the dream is on the point of breaking ; when we become conscious in living that we live, the ill dream is but just beginning. Now if Shelley was but too conscious of the dream, in other respects Dryden's false and famous line might have been applied to him with very much less than its usual untruth.* To the last, in a degree uncommon even among poets, he retained the idiosyncrasy of childhood, expanded and matured without differentiation. To the last he was the enchanted child.

This was, as is well known, patent in his life. It is as really, though perhaps less obviously, manifest in his poetry, the sincere effluence of his life. And it may not, therefore, be amiss to consider whether it was conditioned by anything beyond his congenital nature. For our part, we believe it to have been equally largely the outcome of his early and long isolation. Men given to retirement and abstract study are

* Wordsworth's adaptation of it, however, is true. Men are not 'children of a larger growth,' but the child *is* father of the man, since the parent is only partially reproduced in his offspring.

notoriously liable to contract a certain degree of childlikeness : and if this be the case when we segregate a man, how much more when we segregate a child ! It is when they are taken into the solution of school-life that children, by the reciprocal interchange of influence with their fellows, undergo the series of reactions which converts them from children into boys and from boys into men. The intermediate stage must be traversed to reach the final one.

Now Shelley never could have been a man, for he never was a boy. And the reason lay in the persecution which overclouded his school-days. Of that persecution's effect upon him he has left us, in *The Revolt of Islam*, a picture which to many or most people very probably seems a poetical exaggeration ; partly because Shelley appears to have escaped physical brutality, partly because adults are inclined to smile tenderly at childish sorrows which are not caused by physical suffering. That he escaped for the most part bodily violence is nothing to the purpose. It is the petty malignant annoyance recurring hour by hour, day by day, month by month, until its accumulation becomes an agony ; it is this which is the most terrible weapon that boys have against their fellow boy, who is powerless to shun it because, unlike the man, he has virtually no privacy. His is the torture which the ancients used, when they anointed their victim with honey and exposed him naked to the restless fever of the

flies. He is a little St Sebastian, sinking under the incessant flight of shafts which skilfully avoid the vital parts.

We do not, therefore, suspect Shelley of exaggeration: he was, no doubt, in terrible misery. Those who think otherwise must forget their own past. Most people, we suppose, *must* forget what they were like when they were children: otherwise they would know that the griefs of their childhood were passionate abandonment, *déchirants* (to use a characteristically favourite phrase of modern French literature) as the griefs of their maturity. Children's griefs are little, certainly; but so is the child, so is its endurance, so is its field of vision, while its nervous impressionability is keener than ours. Grief is a matter of relativity; the sorrow should be estimated by its proportion to the sorrower; a gash is as painful to one as an amputation to another. Pour a puddle into a thimble, or an Atlantic into Etna; both thimble and mountain overflow. Adult fools! would not the angels smile at *our* griefs, were not angels too wise to smile at them?

So beset, the child fled into the tower of his own soul, and raised the drawbridge. He threw out a reserve, encysted in which he grew to maturity unaffected by the intercourses that modify the maturity of others into the thing we call a man. The encysted child developed until it reached years of virility, until those later Oxford days in which Hogg encountered

it ; then, bursting at once from its cyst and the university, it swam into a world not illegitimately perplexed by such a whim of the gods. It was, of course, only the completeness and duration of this seclusion—lasting from the gate of boyhood to the threshold of youth—which was peculiar to Shelley. Most poets, probably, like most saints, are prepared for their mission by an initial segregation, as the seed is buried to germinate : before they can utter the oracle of poetry, they must first be divided from the body of men. It is the severed head that makes the seraph.

Shelley's life frequently exhibits in him the magnified child. It is seen in his fondness for apparently futile amusements, such as the sailing of paper boats. This was, in the truest sense of the word, child-like ; not, as it is frequently called and considered, childish. That is to say, it was not a mindless triviality, but the genuine child's power of investing little things with imaginative interest ; the same power, though differently devoted, which produced much of his poetry. Very possibly in the paper boat he saw the magic bark of Laon and Cythna, or

> That thinnest boat
> In which the mother of the months is borne
> By ebbing night into her western cave.

In fact, if you mark how favourite an idea, under varying forms, is this in his verse, you will perceive that all the charmed boats which glide

down the stream of his poetry are but glorified resurrections of the little paper argosies which trembled down the Isis.

And the child appeared no less often in Shelley the philosopher than in Shelley the idler. It is seen in his repellent no less than in his amiable weaknesses ; in the unteachable folly of a love that made its goal its starting-point, and firmly expected spiritual rest from each new divinity, though it had found none from the divinities antecedent. For we are clear that this was no mere straying of sensual appetite, but a straying, strange and deplorable, of the spirit ; that (contrary to what Coventry Patmore has said) he left a woman not because he was tired of her arms, but because he was tired of her soul. When he found Mary Shelley wanting, he seems to have fallen into the mistake of Wordsworth, who complained in a charming piece of unreasonableness that his wife's love, which had been a fountain, was now only a well:

> Such change, and at the very door
> Of my fond heart, hath made me poor.

Wordsworth probably learned, what Shelley was incapable of learning, that love can never permanently be a fountain. A living poet, in an article* which you almost fear to breathe upon lest you should flutter some of the frail pastel-like bloom, has said the thing: 'Love

* *The Rhythm of Life*, by Alice Meynell.

itself has tidal moments, lapses and flows due to the metrical rule of the interior heart.' Elementary reason should proclaim this true. Love is an affection, its display an emotion : love is the air, its display is the wind. An affection may be constant ; an emotion can no more be constant than the wind can constantly blow. All, therefore, that a man can reasonably ask of his wife is that her love should be indeed a well. A well ; but a Bethesda-well, into which from time to time the angel of tenderness descends to trouble the waters for the healing of the beloved. Such a love Shelley's second wife appears unquestionably to have given him. Nay, she was content that he should veer while she remained true ; she companioned him intellectually, shared his views, entered into his aspirations, and yet—yet, even at the date of *Epipsychidion*, the foolish child, her husband, assigned her the part of moon to Emilia Viviani's sun, and lamented that he was barred from final, certain, irreversible happiness by a cold and callous society. Yet few poets were so mated before, and no poet was so mated afterwards, until Browning stooped and picked up a fair-coined soul that lay rusting in a pool of tears.

In truth, his very unhappiness and discontent with life, in so far as it was not the inevitable penalty of the ethical anarch, can only be ascribed to this same childlike irrationality—though in such a form it is irrationality hardly peculiar to Shelley. Pity, if you will, his

spiritual ruins, and the neglected early training which was largely their cause ; but the pity due to his outward circumstances has been strangely exaggerated. The obloquy from which he suffered he deliberately and wantonly courted. For the rest, his lot was one that many a young poet might envy. He had faithful friends, a faithful wife, an income small but assured. Poverty never dictated to his pen ; the designs on his bright imagination were never etched by the sharp fumes of necessity.

If, as has chanced to others—as chanced, for example, to Mangan—outcast from home, health and hope, with a charred past and a bleared future, an anchorite without detachment, and self-cloistered without self-sufficingness, deposed from a world which he had not abdicated, pierced with thorns which formed no crown, a poet hopeless of the bays, and a martyr hopeless of the palm, a land cursed against the dews of love, an exile banned and proscribed even from the innocent arms of childhood—he were burning helpless at the stake of his unquenchable heart, then he might have been inconsolable, then might he have cast the gorge at life, then have cowered in the darkening chamber of his being, tapestried with mouldering hopes, and hearkened to the winds that swept across the illimitable wastes of death. But no such hapless lot was Shelley's as that of his own contemporaries—Keats, half-chewed in the jaws of London and spit dying

on to Italy; De Quincey, who, if he escaped, escaped rent and maimed from those cruel jaws; Coleridge, whom they dully mumbled for the major portion of his life. Shelley had competence, poetry, love; yet he wailed that he could lie down like a tired child and weep away his life of care! Is it ever so with you, sad brother? is it ever so with me? and is there no drinking of pearls except they be dissolved in biting tears? 'Which of us has his desire, or having it, is satisfied?'

It is true that he shared the fate of nearly all the great poets contemporary with him, in being unappreciated. Like them, he suffered from critics who were for ever shearing the wild tresses of poetry between rusty rules, who could never see a literary bough project beyond the trim level of its day but they must lop it with a crooked criticism, who kept indomitably planting in the defile of fame the 'established canons' that had been spiked by poet after poet. But we decline to believe that a singer of Shelley's calibre could be seriously grieved by want of vogue. Not that we suppose him to have found consolation in that senseless superstition, 'the applause of posterity.' Posterity, posterity! posterity which goes to Rome, weeps large-sized tears, carves beautiful inscriptions, over the tomb of Keats; and the worm must wriggle her curtsey to it all, since the dead boy, wherever he be, has quite other gear to tend. Never a bone less dry for all the tears!

A poet must to some extent be a chameleon, and feed on air. But it need not be the musty breath of the multitude. He can find his needful support in the judgement of those whose judgement he knows valuable, and such support Shelley had :

> La gloire
> Ne compte pas toujours les voix ;
> Elle les pèse quelquefois.

Yet if this might be needful to him as support, neither this, nor the applause of the present, nor the applause of posterity, could have been needful to him as motive : the one all-sufficing motive for a great poet's singing is that expressed by Keats :

> I was taught in Paradise
> To ease my breast of melodies.

Precisely so. The overcharged breast can find no ease but in suckling the baby-song. No enmity of outward circumstances, therefore, but his own nature, was responsible for Shelley's doom.

A being with so much about it of childlike unreasonableness, and yet withal so much of the beautiful attraction luminous in a child's sweet unreasonableness, would seem fore-fated by its very essence to the transience of the bubble and the rainbow, of all things filmy and fair. Did some shadow of this destiny bear part in his sadness ? Certain it is that, by a curious

chance, he himself in *Julian and Maddalo* jestingly foretold the manner of his end. 'O ho! You talk as in years past,' said Maddalo (Byron) to Julian (Shelley); 'if you can't swim, Beware of Providence.' Did no unearthly *dixisti* sound in his ears as he wrote it? But a brief while, and Shelley, who could not swim, was weltering on the waters of Lerici. We know not how this may affect others, but over us it is a coincidence which has long tyrannized with an absorbing inveteracy of impression (strengthened rather than diminished by the contrast between the levity of the utterance and its fatal fulfilment)—thus to behold, heralding itself in warning mockery through the very lips of its predestined victim, the Doom upon whose breath his locks were lifting along the coasts of Campania. The death which he had prophesied came upon him, and Spezzia enrolled another name among the mournful Marcelli of our tongue; Venetian glasses which foamed and burst before the poisoned wine of life had risen to their brims.

Coming to Shelley's poetry, we peep over the wild mask of revolutionary metaphysics, and we see the winsome face of the child. Perhaps none of his poems is more purely and typicallg Shelleian than *The Cloud*, and it is interestiny to note how essentially it springs from the faculty of make-believe. The same thing is conspicuous, though less purely conspicuous,

throughout his singing ; it is the child's faculty of make-believe raised to the n^{th} power. He is still at play, save only that his play is such as manhood stops to watch, and his playthings are those which the gods give their children. The universe is his box of toys. He dabbles his fingers in the day-fall. He is gold-dusty with tumbling amidst the stars. He makes bright mischief with the moon. The meteors nuzzle their noses in his hand. He teases into growling the kennelled thunder, and laughs at the shaking of its fiery chain. He dances in and out of the gates of heaven : its floor is littered with his broken fancies. He runs wild over the fields of ether. He chases the rolling world. He gets between the feet of the horses of the sun. He stands in the lap of patient Nature, and twines her loosened tresses after a hundred wilful fashions, to see how she will look nicest in his song.

This it was which, in spite of his essentially modern character as a singer, qualified Shelley to be the poet of *Prometheus Unbound*, for it made him, in the truest sense of the word, a mythological poet. This child-like quality assimilated him to the child-like peoples among whom mythologies have their rise. Those Nature myths which, according to many, are the basis of all mythology, are likewise the very basis of Shelley's poetry. The lark that is the gossip of heaven, the winds that pluck the grey from the beards of the billows, the clouds that are snorted from the sea's broad nostril, all the

elemental spirits of Nature, take from his verse perpetual incarnation and reincarnation, pass in a thousand glorious transmigrations through the radiant forms of his imagery.

Thus, but not in the Wordsworthian sense, he is a veritable poet of Nature. For with Nature the Wordsworthians will admit no tampering : they exact the direct interpretative reproduction of her ; that the poet should follow her as a mistress, not use her as a handmaid. To such following of Nature, Shelley felt no call. He saw in her not a picture set for his copying, but a palette set for his brush ; not a habitation prepared for his inhabiting, but a Coliseum whence he might quarry stones for his own palaces. Even in his descriptive passages the dream-character of his scenery is notorious ; it is not the clear, recognizable scenery of Wordsworth, but a landscape that hovers athwart the heat and haze arising from his crackling fantasies. The materials for such visionary Edens have evidently been accumulated from direct experience, but they are recomposed by him into such scenes as never mortal eye beheld. ' Don't you wish you had ? ' as Turner said. The one justification for classing Shelley with the Lake poet is that he loved Nature with a love even more passionate, though perhaps less profound. Wordsworth's *Nightingale and Stockdove* sums up the contrast between the two, as though it had been written for such a purpose. Shelley is the ' creature of ebullient heart,' who

Sings as if the god of wine
Had helped him to a valentine.

Wordsworth's is the

—Love with quiet blending,
Slow to begin and never ending,

the 'serious faith and inward glee.'

But if Shelley, instead of culling Nature, crossed with its pollen the blossoms of his own soul, that Babylonian garden is his marvellous and best apology. For astounding figurative opulence he yields only to Shakespeare, and even to Shakespeare not in absolute fecundity but in range of images. The sources of his figurative wealth are specialized, while the sources of Shakespeare's are universal. It would have been as conscious an effort for him to speak without figure as it is for most men to speak with figure. Suspended in the dripping well of his imagination the commonest object becomes encrusted with imagery. Herein again he deviates from the true Nature poet, the normal Wordsworth type of Nature poet: imagery was to him not a mere means of expression, not even a mere means of adornment, it was a delight for its own sake.

And herein we find the trail by which we would classify him. He belongs to a school of which not impossibly he may hardly have read a line—the Metaphysical School. To a large extent, he *is* what the Metaphysical School

should have been. That school was a certain kind of poetry trying for a range. Shelley is the range found. Crashaw and Shelley sprang from the same seed ; but in the one case the seed was choked with thorns, in the other case it fell on good ground. The Metaphysical School was in its direct results an abortive movement, though indirectly much came of it—for Dryden came of it. Dryden, to a greater extent than is (we imagine) generally perceived, was Cowley systematized ; and Cowley, who sank into the arms of Dryden, rose from the lap of Donne.

But the movement was so abortive that few will thank us for connecting with it the name of Shelley. This is because to most people the Metaphysical School means Donne, whereas it ought to mean Crashaw. We judge the direction of a development by its highest form, though that form may have been produced but once, and produced imperfectly. Now the highest product of the Metaphysical School was Crashaw, and Crashaw was a Shelley *manqué ;* he never reached the Promised Land, but he had fervid visions of it. The Metaphysical School, like Shelley, loved imagery for its own sake : and how beautiful a thing the frank toying with imagery may be, let *The Skylark* and *The Cloud* witness. It is only evil when the poet, on the straight way to a fixed object, lags continually from the path to play. This is commendable neither in poet nor errand-boy. The Metaphysical School failed, not because it toyed with

imagery, but because it toyed with it frostily. To sport with the tangles of Neæra's hair may be trivial idleness or caressing tenderness, exactly as your relation to Neæra is that of heartless gallantry or of love. So you may toy with imagery in mere intellectual ingenuity, and then you might as well go write acrostics: or you may toy with it in raptures, and then you may write a *Sensitive Plant*. In fact, the Metaphysical poets when they went astray cannot be said to have done anything so dainty as is implied by *toying* with imagery. They cut it into shapes with a pair of scissors. From all such danger Shelley was saved by his passionate spontaneity; no trappings are too splendid for the swift steeds of sunrise. His sword-hilt may be rough with jewels, but it is the hilt of an Excalibur. His thoughts scorch through all the folds of expression. His cloth of gold bursts at the flexures, and shows the naked poetry.

It is this gift of not merely embodying but apprehending everything in figure which co-operates towards creating one of his rarest characteristics, so almost preternaturally developed in no other poet, namely, his well-known power to condense the most hydrogenic abstraction. Science can now educe threads of such exquisite tenuity that only the feet of the tiniest infant-spiders can ascend them; but up the filmiest insubstantiality Shelley runs with agile ease. To him, in truth, nothing is abstract

The dustiest abstractions

Start, and tremble under his feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

The coldest moon of an idea rises haloed through his vaporous imagination. The dimmest-sparked chip of a conception blazes and scintillates in the subtile oxygen of his mind. The most wrinkled Æson of an abstruseness leaps rosy out of his bubbling genius. In a more intensified signification than it is probable that Shakespeare dreamed of, Shelley gives to airy nothings a local habitation and a name. Here afresh he touches the Metaphysical School, whose very title was drawn from this habitual pursuit of abstractions, and who failed in that pursuit from the one cause omnipresent with them, because in all their poetic smithy they had left never a place for a forge. They laid their fancies chill on the anvil. Crashaw, indeed, partially anticipated Shelley's success, and yet further did a later poet, so much further that we find it difficult to understand why a generation that worships Shelley should be reviving Gray, yet almost forget the name of Collins. The generality of readers, when they know him at all, usually know him by his *Ode on the Passions*. In this, despite its beauty, there is still a *soupçon* of formalism, a lingering trace of powder from the eighteenth century periwig, dimming the bright locks of poetry. Only the literary student reads that little masterpiece, the *Ode to Evening*, which sometimes heralds the Shelleian strain, while other passages are

the sole things in the language comparable to the miniatures of *Il Penseroso*. Crashaw, Collins, Shelley—three ricochets of the one pebble, three jets from three bounds of the one Pegasus! Collins's Pity, 'with eyes of dewy light,' is near of kin to Shelley's Sleep, 'the filmy-eyed'; and the 'shadowy tribes of mind' are the lineal progenitors of 'Thought's crowned powers.' This, however, is personification, wherein both Collins and Shelley build on Spenser: the dizzying achievement to which the modern poet carried personification accounts for but a moiety, if a large moiety, of his vivifying power over abstractions. Take the passage (already alluded to) in that glorious chorus telling how the Hours come

> From those skiey towers
> Where Thought's crowned powers
> Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours;
>
> * * * * * *
>
> From the temples high
> Of Man's ear and eye,
> Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy,
> Our feet now, every palm,
> Are sandalled with calm,
> And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm;
> And beyond our eyes
> The human love lies
> Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

Any partial explanation will break in our hands before it reaches the root of such a power. The

root, we take it, is this. He had an instinctive perception (immense in range and fertility, astonishing for its delicate intuition) of the underlying analogies, the secret subterranean passages, between matter and soul; the chromatic scales, whereat we dimly guess, by which the Almighty modulates through all the keys of creation. Because, the more we consider it, the more likely does it appear that Nature is but an imperfect actress, whose constant changes of dress never change her manner and method, who is the same in all her parts.

To Shelley's ethereal vision the most rarefied mental or spiritual music traced its beautiful corresponding forms on the sand of outward things. He stood thus at the very junction-lines of the visible and invisible, and could shift the points as he willed. His thoughts became a mounted infantry, passing with baffling swiftness from horse to foot or foot to horse. He could express as he listed the material and the immaterial in terms of each other. Never has a poet in the past rivalled him as regards this gift, and hardly will any poet rival him as regards it in the future: men are like first to see the promised doom lay its hand on the tree of heaven and shake down the golden leaves.*

The finest specimens of this faculty are probably to be sought in that Shelleian treasury,

* 'And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.' (Rev. vi, 13.)

Prometheus Unbound. It is unquestionably the greatest and most prodigal exhibition of Shelley's powers, this amazing lyric world, where immortal clarities sigh past in the perfumes of the blossoms, populate the breathings of the breeze, throng and twinkle in the leaves that twirl upon the bough ; where the very grass is all a-rustle with lovely spirit-things, and a weeping mist of music fills the air. The final scenes especially are such a Bacchic reel and rout and revelry of beauty as leaves one staggered and giddy ; poetry is spilt like wine, music runs to drunken waste. The choruses sweep down the wind, tirelessly, flight after flight, till the breathless soul almost cries for respite from the unrolling splendours. Yet these scenes, so wonderful from a purely poetical standpoint that no one could wish them away, are (to our humble thinking) nevertheless the artistic error of the poem. Abstractedly, the development of Shelley's idea required that he should show the earthly paradise which was to follow the fall of Zeus. But dramatically with that fall the action ceases, and the drama should have ceased with it. A final chorus, or choral series, of rejoicings (such as does ultimately end the drama where Prometheus appears on the scene) would have been legitimate enough. Instead, however, the bewildered reader finds the drama unfolding itself through scene after scene which leaves the action precisely where it found it, because there is no longer an action to advance. It is as if the

choral *finale* of an opera were prolonged through two acts.

We have, nevertheless, called *Prometheus* Shelley's greatest poem, because it is the most comprehensive storehouse of his power. Were we asked to name the most *perfect* among his longer efforts, we should name the poem in which he lamented Keats; under the shed petals of his lovely fancy giving the slain bird a silken burial. Seldom is the death of a poet mourned in true poetry. Not often is the singer coffined in laurel-wood. Among the very few exceptions to such a rule, the greatest is *Adonais*. In the English language only *Lycidas* competes with it; and when we prefer *Adonais* to *Lycidas*, we are following the precedent set in the case of Cicero: *Adonais* is the longer. As regards command over abstraction, it is no less characteristically Shelleian than *Prometheus*. It is throughout a series of abstractions vitalized with daring exquisiteness, from Morning who sought

> Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
> Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,

and who

> Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day,

to the Dreams that were the flock of the dead shepherd, the Dreams

Whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed ; and whom he taught
The love that was its music ;

of whom one sees, as she hangs mourning over him,

Upon the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain !
Lost angel of a ruined Paradise !
She knew not 'twas her own ; as with no stain
She faded like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

In the solar spectrum, beyond the extreme red and extreme violet rays, are whole series of colours, demonstrable, but imperceptible to gross human vision. Such writing as this we have quoted renders visible the invisibilities of imaginative colour.

One thing prevents *Adonais* from being ideally perfect : its lack of Christian hope. Yet we remember well the writer of a popular memoir on Keats proposing as " the best consolation for the mind pained by this sad record " Shelley's inexpressibly sad exposition of Pantheistic immortality :

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely, etc.

What utter desolation can it be that discerns comfort in this hope, whose wan countenance is as the countenance of a despair ? Nay, was not

indeed *wanhope* the Saxon for despair ? What deepest depth of agony is it that finds consolation in this immortality : an immortality which thrusts you into death, the maw of Nature, that your dissolved elements may circulate through her veins ?

Yet such, the poet tells me, is my sole balm for the hurts of life. I am as the vocal breath floating from an organ. I too shall fade on the winds, a cadence soon forgotten. So I dissolve and die, and am lost in the ears of men : the particles of my being twine in newer melodies, and from my one death arise a hundred lives. Why, through the thin partition of this consolation Pantheism can hear the groans of its neighbour, Pessimism. Better almost the black resignation which the fatalist draws from his own hopelessness, from the fierce kisses of misery that hiss against his tears.

With some gleams, it is true, of more than mock solace, *Adonais* is lighted ; but they are obtained by implicitly assuming the personal immortality which the poem explicitly denies ; as when, for instance, to greet the dead youth,

> The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
> Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought
> Far in the unapparent.

And again the final stanza of the poem :

> The breath whose might I have invoked in song
> Descends on me ; my spirit's bark is driven

Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given :
The massy earth, the spherèd skies are riven ;
I am borne darkly, fearfully afar,
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of heaven,
The soul of Adonais like a star
Beacons from the abode where the eternal are.

The soul of Adonais ?—Adonais, who is but

A portion of that loveliness
Which once he made more lovely.

After all, to finish where we began, perhaps the poems on which the lover of Shelley leans most lovingly, which he has oftenest in his mind, which best represent Shelley to him, and which he instinctively reverts to when Shelley's name is mentioned, are some of the shorter poems and detached lyrics. Here Shelley forgets for a while all that ever makes his verse turbid ; forgets that he is anything but a poet, forgets sometimes that he is anything but a child ; lies back in his skiff, and looks at the clouds. He plays truant from earth, slips through the wicket of fancy into heaven's meadow, and goes gathering stars. Here we have that absolute virgin-gold of song which is the scarcest among human products, and for which we can go to but three poets—Coleridge, Shelley, Chopin,*

* Such analogies between masters in sister-arts are often interesting. In some respects, is not Brahms the Browning of music ?

and perhaps we should add Keats:—*Christabel* and *Kubla Khan; The Skylark*, *The Cloud*, and *The Sensitive Plant* (in its first two parts); *The Eve of Saint Agnes* and *The Nightingale;* certain of the Nocturnes; these things make very quintessentialized loveliness. It is attar of poetry.

Remark, as a thing worth remarking, that, although Shelley's diction is at other times singularly rich, it ceases in these poems to be rich, or to obtrude itself at all; it is imperceptible; his Muse has become a veritable Echo, whose body has dissolved from about her voice. Indeed, when his diction is richest, nevertheless the poetry so dominates the expression that we only feel the latter as an atmosphere until we are satiated with the former; then we discover with surprise to how imperial a vesture we had been blinded by gazing on the face of his song. A lesson, this, deserving to be conned by a generation so opposite in tendency as our own: a lesson that in poetry, as in the Kingdom of God, we should not take thought too greatly wherewith we shall be clothed, but seek first* the spirit, and all these things will be added unto us.

On the marvellous music of Shelley's verse we need not dwell, except to note that he avoids that metronomic beat of rhythm which Edgar Poe introduced into modern lyric measures, as Pope introduced it into the

* Seek *first*, not seek *only*.

rhyming heroics of his day. Our varied metres are becoming as painfully over-polished as Pope's one metre. Shelley could at need sacrifice smoothness to fitness. He could write an anapæst that would send Mr Swinburne into strong shudders (e.g., 'stream did glide') when he instinctively felt that by so forgoing the more obvious music of melody he would better secure the higher music of harmony. If we have to add that in other ways he was far from escaping the defects of his merits, and would sometimes have to acknowledge that his Nilotic flood too often overflowed its banks, what is this but saying that he died young?

It may be thought that in our casual comments on Shelley's life we have been blind to its evil side. That, however, is not the case. We see clearly that he committed grave sins, and one cruel crime; but we remember also that he was an Atheist from his boyhood; we reflect how gross must have been the moral neglect in the training of a child who *could* be an Atheist from his boyhood: and we decline to judge so unhappy a being by the rules which we should apply to a Catholic. It seems to us that Shelley was struggling—blindly, weakly, stumblingly, but still struggling—towards higher things. His Pantheism is an indication of it. Pantheism is a half-way house and marks ascent or descent according to the direction from which it is approached. Now Shelley came to it from

absolute Atheism ; therefore in his case it meant rise. Again, his poetry alone would lead us to the same conclusion, for we do not believe that a truly corrupted spirit can write consistently ethereal poetry. We should believe in nothing if we believed that, for it would be the consecration of a lie. Poetry is a thermometer : by taking its average height you can estimate the normal temperature of its writer's mind. The devil can do many things. But the devil cannot write poetry. He may mar a poet, but he cannot make a poet. Among all the temptations wherewith he tempted St Anthony, though we have often seen it stated that he howled, we have never seen it stated that he sang.

Shelley's anarchic principles were as a rule held by him with some misdirected view to truth. He disbelieved in kings. And is it not a mere fact—regret it if you will—that in all European countries, except two, monarchs are a mere survival, the obsolete buttons on the coat-tails of rule, which serve no purpose but to be continually coming off ? It is a miserable thing to note how every little Balkan State, having obtained liberty (save the mark!) by Act of Congress, straightway proceeds to secure the service of a professional king. These gentlemen are plentiful in Europe. They are the 'noble Chairmen' who lend their names for a consideration to any enterprising company which may be speculating in Liberty. When we see these things, we revert to the old lines in which

Persius tells how you cannot turn Dama into a freeman by twirling him round your finger and calling him Marcus Dama.

Again, Shelley desired a religion of humanity, and that meant, to him, a religion for humanity, a religion which, unlike the spectral Christianity about him, should permeate and regulate the whole organization of men. And the feeling is one with which a Catholic must sympathize, in an age where—if we may say so without irreverence—the Almighty has been made a constitutional Deity, with certain state-grants of worship, but no influence over political affairs. In these matters Shelley's aims were generous, if his methods were perniciously mistaken. In his theory of Free Love alone, borrowed like the rest from the Revolution, his aim was as mischievous as his method. At the same time he was at least logical. His theory was repulsive, but comprehensible. Whereas from our present *via media*—facilitation of divorce—can only result the era when the young lady in reduced circumstances will no longer turn governess, but will be open to engagement as wife at a reasonable stipend.

We spoke of the purity of Shelley's poetry. We know of but three passages to which exception can be taken. One is happily hidden under a heap of Shelleian rubbish. Another is offensive because it presents his theory of Free Love in its most odious form. The third is very much a matter, we think, for the individual

conscience. Compare with this the genuinely corrupt Byron, through the cracks and fissures of whose heaving versification steam up perpetually the sulphurous vapours from his central iniquity. We cannot credit that any Christian ever had his faith shaken through reading Shelley, unless his faith were shaken before he read Shelley. Is any safely-havened bark likely to slip its cable, and make for a flag planted on the very reef where the planter himself was wrecked?

Why indeed (one is tempted to ask in concluding) should it be that the poets who have written for us the poetry richest in skiey grain, most free from admixture with the duller things of earth—the Shelleys, the Coleridges, the Keats'—are the very poets whose lives are among the saddest records in literature? Is it that (by some subtile mystery of analogy) sorrow, passion, and fantasy are indissolubly connected, like water, fire, and cloud; that as from sun and dew are born the vapours, so from fire and tears ascend the 'visions of aërial joy'; that the harvest waves richest over the battle-fields of the soul; that the heart, like the earth, smells sweetest after rain; that the spell on which depend such necromantic castles is some spirit of pain charm-prisoned at their base?*

* We hope that we need not refer the reader, for the methods of magic architecture, to Ariosto and that Atlas among enchanters, Beckford.

Such a poet, it may be, mists with sighs the window of his life until the tears run down it; then some air of searching poetry, like an air of searching frost, turns it to a crystal wonder. The god of golden song is the god, too, of the golden sun; so peradventure songlight is like sunlight, and darkens the countenance of the soul. Perhaps the rays are to the stars what thorns are to the flowers; and so the poet, after wandering over heaven, returns with bleeding feet. Less tragic in its merely temporal aspect than the life of Keats or Coleridge, the life of Shelley in its moral aspect is, perhaps, more tragical than that of either; his dying seems a myth, a figure of his living; the material shipwreck a figure of the immaterial.

Enchanted child, born into a world unchildlike; spoiled darling of Nature, playmate of her elemental daughters; 'pard-like spirit, beautiful and swift,' laired amidst the burning fastnesses of his own fervid mind; bold foot along the verges of precipitous dream; light leaper from crag to crag of inaccessible fancies; towering Genius, whose soul rose like a ladder between heaven and earth with the angels of song ascending and descending it;—he is shrunken into the little vessel of death, and sealed with the unshatterable seal of doom, and cast down deep below the rolling tides of Time. Mighty meat for little guests, when the heart of Shelley was laid in the cemetery of Caius Cestius! Beauty, music, sweetness, tears—the

mouth of the worm has fed of them all. Into that sacred bridal-gloom of death where he holds his nuptials with eternity let not our rash speculations follow him ; let us hope rather that as, amidst material nature, where our dull eyes see only ruin, the finer eye of science has discovered life in putridity and vigour in decay, seeing dissolution even and disintegration, which in the mouth of man symbolize disorder, to be in the works of God undeviating order, and the manner of our corruption to be no less wonderful than the manner of our health,—so, amidst the supernatural universe, some tender undreamed surprise of life in doom awaited that wild nature, which, worn by warfare with itself, its Maker, and all the world, now

> Sleeps, and never palates more the dug,
> The beggar's nurse, and Cæsar's.

PAGANISM OLD AND NEW

PAGANISM, a natural religion obviously capable of accommodating itself to widely different natures by reason of its flexibility, can also surround itself with the prestige of a great past—though a dead past ; of a poetry—though a dead poetry ; of a sculpture—though a dead sculpture ; of an idealizing retrospection which is *not* dead. And it can proclaim that, with the revival of dead Paganism, these other dead things too shall live. The old gods, say its advocates, were warm with human life, and akin to human sympathy : beautiful gods whose names were poetry. Then the daily gracefulness of Pagan life and religion ! The ceremonial pageants, with the fluent grace of their processional maidens, as they

> —— shook a most divine dance from their feet ;

or the solemn chastity of their vestal virgins ; the symmetry of their temples with their effigies of benignant powers ; the street, adorned with noble statuary, invested with a crystal air, and bright with its moving throng in garments of unlaboured elegance ; and the theatre unroofed to the smokeless sky, where an audience, in which the merest cobbler had some vision beyond his last, heard in the language of Æschylus or Sophocles the ancestral legends of its native land.

With all this, these advocates contrast the condition of to-day : the cold formalities of an outworn worship ; our *ne plus ultra* of pageantry, a Lord Mayor's Show ; the dryadless woods regarded chiefly as potential timber ; the grimy street, the grimy air, the disfiguring statues, the Stygian crowd ; the temple to the reigning goddess Gelasma, which mocks the name of theatre ; last and worst, the fatal degradation of popular perception, which has gazed so long on ugliness that it takes her to its bosom. In our capitals the very heavens have lost their innocence. Aurora may rise over our cities, but she has forgotten how to blush.

And those who, like the present writer, tread as on thorns amidst the sordidness and ugliness, the ugly sordidness and the sordid ugliness, the dull materiality and weariness of this unhonoured old age of the world,—cannot but sympathize with these feelings ; nay, even look back with a certain passionate regret to the beauty which invested at least the outward life of those days. But, in truth, with this outward life the vesture of beauty ceases : the rest is a day-dream, lovely it is true, but none the less a dream. Heathenism is lovely *because* it is dead. To read Keats is to grow in love with Paganism ; but it is the Paganism of Keats. Pagan Paganism was not poetical.

Literally, this assertion is untenable. Almost every religion becomes a centre of poetry. But, if not absolutely true, it is at least true with

relation to Christianity. The poetry of Paganism is chiefly a modern creation; in the hands of the Pagans themselves it was not even developed to its full capabilities. The gods of Homer are braggarts and gluttons; and the gods of Virgil are cold and unreal. The kiss of Dian was a frigid kiss till it glowed in the fancy of the barbarian Fletcher: there was little halo around Latmos' top, till it was thrown around it by the modern Keats. No pagan eye ever visioned the nymphs of Shelley. In truth there was around the Olympian heaven no such halo and native air of poetry as, for Christian singers, clothed the Christian heaven. To the heathen mind its divinities were graceful, handsome, noble gods; powerful, and therefore to be propitiated with worship; cold in their sublime selfishness, and therefore unlovable. No Pagan ever loved his god. Love he might, perhaps, some humble rustic or domestic deity,—but no Olympian. Whereas, in the Christian religion, the Madonna, and a greater than the Madonna, were at once high enough for worship and low enough for love. Now, without love no poetry can be beautiful; for all beautiful poetry comes from the heart. With love it was that Wordsworth and Shelley purchased the right to sing sweetly of Nature. Keats wrote lovingly of his Pagan hierarchy, because what he wrote about he loved. Hence for no antique poet was it possible to make, or even conceive, a Pagan Paradise. We, who love the gods, do not worship them.

The ancients, who worshipped the gods, did not love them. Whence is this ?

Coleridge, in those beautiful lines from *Wallenstein*, has given us his explanation. It is true, yet only half the truth. For in very deed that beautiful mythology has a beauty beyond anything it ever possessed in its worshipped days ; and that beauty came to it in dower when it gave its hand to Christianity. Christianity it was that stripped the weeds from that garden of Paganism, broke its statue of Priapus, and delivered it smiling and fair to the nations for their pleasure-ground. She found Mars the type of brute violence, and made of him the god of valour. She took Venus, and made of her the type of Beauty,—Beauty, which the average heathen hardly knew. There is no more striking instance of the poetizing influence exerted on the ancient mythology by Christianity than the contrast between the ancient and modern views of this goddess. Any school-boy will tell you that she was the Goddess of Love and Beauty. ' Goddess of Love,' is true only in the lowest sense—but ' Goddess of Beauty ' ? It exhibits an essentially modern attitude towards Venus, and would be hard to support from the ancient poets. No doubt there are passages in which she is styled the beautiful goddess ; but the phrases are scarcely to my point. If, in the early days of the Second Empire, you came across a writer who described the Empress Eugénie as ' the beautiful Empress,'

you would hardly be fair in deducing from *that* his devotion to her as the Empress of Beauty. No; when Heine, addressing the Venus of Melos, called her 'Our Lady of Beauty,' the idea, no less than the expression, was centrally modern. I will go further. It was centrally Christian.

To the average Pagan, Venus was simply the personification of the generative principle in nature; and her offspring was Cupid,—Desire, Eros—sexual passion. Far other is she to the modern. To him she is the Principle of Earthly Beauty, who, being of necessity entirely pure, walks naked and is not ashamed, garmented in the light of her unchanging whiteness. This worship of Beauty in the abstract, this conception of the Lady Beauty as an all-amiable power, to register the least glance of whose eye, to catch the least trail of whose locks, were worth the devotion of a life,—all this is characteristic of the Christian and Gothic poet, unknown to the Pagan poet. No antique singer ever saw Sibylla Palmifera; no antique artist's hand ever shook in her pursuit.* The sculptors, I suspect, had known something of Sibylla, in the elder days, before Praxiteles made of the Queen of Beauty merely the Queen of Fair Women. The

* Philosophers and 'dreaming Platonists,' perhaps, had scaled her craggy heights after their own manner, but none will pretend that Platonic dreams of the 'First and Only Fair' were the offspring of Paganism. Rather were they a contravention of it.

Venus of Melos remains to hint so much. But, besides that Greek sculpture is virtually dead and unrevivable in civilized lands, I do not purpose in this narrow space to deal with subjects so wide as Sculpture or Art. Suffice it if I can suggest a few of the irreparable losses to Poetry which would result from the supersession of the Christian by the Pagan spirit.

If there are two things on which the larger portion of our finest modern verse may be said to hinge, they are surely Nature and Love. Yet it would be the merest platitude to say that neither the one nor the other, as glorified by our great modern poets, was known to the singers of old. Their insensibility to landscape was accompanied and perhaps conditioned by an insensibility to all the subtler and more spiritual qualities of beauty; so that it would hardly be more than a pardonable exaggeration to call Christianity (in so far as it has influenced the arts) the religion of beauty, and Paganism the religion of form and sense. Perhaps it is incorrect to say that the ancients were indifferent to landscape: rather they were indifferent to Nature. Cicero luxuriates in his 'country,' Horace in his Socrate and fitful glimpses of scenery; but both merely as factors in the composition of enjoyment: the bees, the doves, of Virgil are mere ministers to luxury and sleep. 'The fool,' says Blake in a most pregnant aphorism, 'The fool sees not the same tree as a wise man sees.' And assuredly no heathen

ever saw the same tree as Wordsworth. For it is a noteworthy fact that the intellect of man seems unable to seize the divine beauty of Nature, until moving beyond that outward beauty it gazes on the spirit of Nature : even as the mind seems unable to appreciate the beautiful face of woman until it has learned to appreciate the more beautiful beauty of her soul.

That Paganism had no real sense of the exquisite in female features is evident from its statues and few extant paintings : mere regularity of form is all it sees. Or again, compare the ancient erotic poets, delighting in the figure and bodily charms of their mistresses, with the modern love-poets, whose first care is to dwell on the heavenly breathings of their ladies' faces. Significant is it, from this point of view, that the very word in favourite use among the Latin poets to express beauty should be *forma*, form, grace of body and line. When Catullus pronounces on the charms of a rival to his mistress, he never even mentions her face. 'Candida, longa, recta;' that is all : 'She is fair, tall, straight.'

But the most surprising indication of this blindness to the subtler qualities of beauty is the indifference of the ancient singers to what in our estimation is the most lovely and important feature in woman—the eye. This may have some connexion with their apparent deadness to colour. But so it is. In all Catullus there is only a single *indirect* allusion to the

colour of Lesbia's eyes. There is, to the best of my recollection, no such allusion at all throughout Tibullus, Propertius, or Ovid. This one fact reveals a desert of arid feeling in the old erotic poets which a modern imagination refuses to traverse. In the name of all the Muses, what treason against Love and Beauty! Why, from the poetical Spring of Chaucer to the Indian-Summer of William Morris, their ladies' eyes have been the cynosure of modern love-poets!

> Debonair, good, glad, and sad,

are the admirably chosen words in which Chaucer describes his Duchess' eyes; and this is the beautiful passage in which Morris sets *his* lady's eyes before us:

> Her great eyes, standing far apart,
> *Draw up some memory from her heart,*
> And gaze out very mournfully;
> Beata mea Domina!—
> So beautiful and kind they are,
> But most times looking out afar,
> Waiting for something, not for me.
> Beata mea Domina!

The value which Morris' master, Rossetti, had for this feature in feminine attraction is conspicuous. Witness his Blessed Damozel, whose

> — Eyes were deeper than the depth
> Of waters stilled at even.

In his mistress' portrait he notes that

> The shadowed eyes remember and forget.

Tennyson's Isabel has

> Eyes not down-dropt nor over-bright, but fed
> With the clear-pointed flame of chastity.

And almost all his heroines have their characteristic eyes : the Gardener's Daughter, violet, Amy of Locksley Hall, hazel,

> All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes ;

Enid, meek blue eyes ; and so on. Wordsworth, again, notes his wife's

> Eyes like stars of twilight fair ;

and has many a beautiful passage on female eyes. Shelley overflows with such passages, showing splendid power in conveying the idea of *depth :* the following is a random example :

> —— deep her eyes as are
> Two openings of unfathomable night
> Seen through a tempest's cloven roof.

Will any one forget the eyes of the dreaming Christabel ?

> Both blue eyes, more bright than clear,
> *Each about to have a tear.*

One could multiply instances ; but take as a last one those magnificent eyes of De Quincey's *Mater Suspiriarum :* ' Her eyes were filled with perishing dreams, and wrecks of forgotten delirium.'

Again, what a magnificent means of characterization—especially in personification—do

our poets make of the eye. Could anything be more felicitous than Collins' Pity

With eyes of dewy light ?

And equally marvellous is Shelley's epithet for sleep :

Thy sweet child Sleep, the *filmy-eyed.*

Yet all this superfluity of poetic beauty remained a sealed fountain for the Pagan poets ! After such a revelation it can excite little surprise that,compared with Christian writers, they lay little stress on the grace of female hair.

But, after all, the most beautiful thing in love-poetry is Love. Now Love is the last thing any scholar will look for in ancient erotic poetry.* Body differs not more from soul than the Amor of Catullus or Ovid differs from the Love of Dante or Shelley ;† and the root of this difference is the root of the whole difference between this class of poetry in antique and contemporary periods. The rite of marriage was to the Pagan the goal and attainment of Love—Love, which he regarded as a transitory and

* It will not do to say that this was solely owing to the impossibility of what we call courtship in heathen society ; and that heathen love was postnuptial. It is sufficiently apparent from Martial's allusions that the married poems of Sulpicia, styled and considered ' chaste ' because addressed to her husband, would have justly incurred among us the reproach of licentiousness in treatment.

† An Anti-Christian in ethics. But the blood in the veins of his Muse was Christian. The spirit of his treatment of Love is—with few, if any, exceptions—entirely Christian.

perishable passion, born of the body and decaying with the body. On the wings of Christianity came the great truth that Love is of the soul, and with the soul coeval.

It was most just and natural, therefore, that from the Christian poets should come the full development of this truth. To Dante and the followers of Dante we must go for its ripe announcement. Not in marriage, they proclaim, is the fulfilment of Love, though its earthly and temporal fulfilment may be therein; for how can Love, which is the desire of soul for soul, attain satisfaction in the conjunction of body with body? Poor, indeed, if this were all the promise which Love unfolded to us—the encountering light of two flames from within their close-shut lanterns. Therefore sings Dante, and sing all noble poets after him, that Love in this world is a pilgrim and a wanderer, journeying to the New Jerusalem: not here is the consummation of his yearnings, in that mere knocking at the gates of union which we christen marriage, but beyond the pillars of death and the corridors of the grave, in the union of spirit to spirit within the containing Spirit of God.

The distance between Catullus and the *Vita Nuova*, between Ovid and the *House of Life*, can be measured only by Christianity. And the lover of poetry owes a double gratitude to his Creator, Who, not content with giving us salvation on the cross, gave us also, at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, Love. For there

Love was consecrated, and declared the child of Jehovah, not of Jove; there virtually was inaugurated the whole successive order of those love-poets who have shown the world that passion, in putting on chastity, put on also tenfold beauty. For purity is the sum of all loveliness, as whiteness is the sum of all colours.

A detailed comparison would be possible between the treatment of the Pagan Olympus by the ancients and by the moderns, with Keats at their head, in order to demonstrate what I have in these pages merely advanced. One point, however, I must briefly notice. This is the false idea that a modern Paganism could perpetuate, from a purely artistic sense, the beauty proper to Christian literature: that it is possible for the imaginative worker, like the conspirator in Massinger, to paint and perfume with the illusion of life a corpse. For refutation, witness the failure of our English painters, with all their art, to paint a Madonna which can hang beside the simplest old Florentine Virgin without exhibiting the absence of the ancient religious feeling.* And what has befallen the loveliness of Catholicity would—in a few generations, when Christianity had faded out of the blood of men—befall the loveliness of Christianity.

Bring back, then, even the best age of Paganism, and you smite beauty on the cheek.

*Rossetti is perhaps an exception. But he had Catholic blood in his veins, and could not escape from it. His heart worshipped.

But you *cannot* bring back the best age of Paganism, the age when Paganism was a faith. None will again behold Apollo in the forefront of the morning, or see Aphrodite in the upper air loose the long lustre of her golden locks. But you *may* bring back—*dii avertant omen*—the Paganism of the days of Pliny, and Statius, and Juvenal; of much philosophy and little belief; of superb villas and superb taste; of banquets for the palate in the shape of cookery, and banquets for the eye in the shape of art; of poetry singing dead songs on dead themes with the most polished and artistic vocalization; of everything most polished, from the manners to the marble floors; of Vice carefully drained out of sight, and large fountains of Virtue springing in the open air;—in one word, a most shining Paganism indeed—as putrescence also shines.

This Paganism it is which already stoops on Paris,* and wheels in shadowy menace over England. Bring back *this*—and make of poetry a dancing-girl, and of art a pandar. This is the Paganism which is formidable, and not the

* Paris, it may be said, is not scrupulous as to draining her vice underground. But it is kept underground exactly to the same extent as vice was in the Plinian days. Private vice is winked at with a decorous platitude about 'the sanctity of private life.' If evil literature is openly written, what Roman or Italian of the younger Pliny's day thought anything of writing '*facetiae*'? If indecent pictures are displayed in the windows, what, I should like to know, if photography had flourished under Rome, would have been the state of the shop-windows of Pompeii?

antique lamp whose feeding oil is spent, whose light has not outlasted the damps of its long sepulture. She who created Zeus and Here, Phœbus and Artemis, Pallas Athene and the fair-haired Aphrodite, is dead, and lives only in her corruption ; nor have we lost by her death one scintillation of beauty. For the poetry of Paganism (with reference to England) was born in the days of Elizabeth, and entered on its inheritance in the days of Keats. But could Paganism indeed grow supple in her cere-cloths, and open her tarnished eyes to the light of our modern sun—in that same hour the poetry of Paganism would sicken and fall to decay. For Pagan Paganism was not poetical.

IN DARKEST ENGLAND

I

IN certain all too frequent moods, when I behold in the sphinx Life not so much that inscrutable face of hers, nor yet her nurturing breasts, but rather her lion's claws ; in such moods, a contrast rises before me. I see, as it were, upon my right hand and upon my left, two regions ; separated only by a few hours' journey along our iron roads. I see upon my right hand a land of lanes, and hedgerows, and meadowed green ; whose people's casual tread is over blossoming yellow, white, and purple, far-shining as the constellations that sand their nightly heaven ; where the very winter rains, into which the deciduous foliage rots, cover the naked boughs with a vividness of dusted emerald.

I look upon my left hand, and I see another region—is it not rather another universe ? A region whose hedgerows have set to brick, whose soil is chilled to stone ; where flowers are sold and women, where the men wither and the stars ; whose streets to me on the most glittering day are black. For I unveil their secret meanings. I read their human hieroglyphs. I diagnose from a hundred occult signs the disease which perturbs their populous pulses. Misery cries out to me from the kerb-stone, despair passes me by in the ways ; I discern limbs laden with fetters impalpable, but not imponderable ;

I hear the shaking of invisible lashes, I see men dabbled with their own oozing life. This contrast rises before me ; and I ask myself whether there be indeed an Ormuzd and an Ahriman, and whether Ahriman be the stronger of the twain. From the claws of the sphinx my eyes have risen to her countenance which no eyes read.

Because, therefore, I have these thoughts ; and because also I have knowledge, not indeed great or wide, but within certain narrow limits more intimate than most men's, of this life which is not a life ; to which food is as the fuel of hunger ; sleep, our common sleep, precious, costly, and fallible, as water in a wilderness ; in which men rob and women vend themselves—for fourpence ; because I have such thoughts and such knowledge, I read with painful sympathy the book just put forward by a singular personality.* I rise from the reading of it with a strong impression that here is a proposal which they who will not bless would do well to abstain from banning. Here is at last a man who has formulated a comprehensive scheme, and has dared to take upon himself its execution. That the terrible welter of London misery has not been left undealt with during recent years, that a multitude of agencies have long been making on it a scattered guerilla warfare, I know. But from their efforts I derived not hope, but despair ; they served only to render darkness

* *In Darkest England,* by General Booth.

visible. Before me stretched an immense, soundless, bitter ocean. On its shore stood a string of benevolent children, equipped with sugar-basins. What were they doing? They were throwing lumps of sugar into the waves, to sweeten the sea. Here was this vast putrescence strangling the air at our very doors, and what scavengers of charity might endeavour its removal? Now comes by a man, and offers to take on himself the responsibility of that removal; in God's name, give him the contract! one inclines to exclaim.

What, then, is his book? The first part is an unexaggerated statement of the facts—too surely facts—regarding the existence of our London outcasts. It is the kind of thing which the public has had so often lately, under one form or another, that I suppose it has ceased to be roused by it. I will therefore only note in it a single point, which for more than one reason I cannot here dwell upon. Let those who are robust enough not to take injury from the terrible directness with which things are stated read the chapter entitled *The Children of the Lost*. For it drives home a truth which I fear the English public, with all its compassion for our destitute children, scarcely realizes, knows but in a vague, general way; namely, that they are brought up in sin from their cradles, that they know evil before they know good, that the boys are ruffians and profligates, the girls harlots in the mother's womb. This, to me the

most nightmarish idea in all the nightmare of those poor little lives, I have never been able to perceive that people had any true grasp on. And having mentioned it, though it is a subject very near my heart, I will say no more ; nor enforce it, as I might well do, from my own sad knowledge.

In the name of the Mother of Sorrows, our derelict Catholic men and women shall not have to wait till the Salvation Army has bruised our heel. We have done much already, considering our means ; therefore it is that we shall do more. Take, for instance, General Booth's Slum Sisters, themselves living in a house like the tenements around them, cleaning in the dwellings of the poor, and nursing their sick. Then read the constitution given by St Vincent de Paul to his Sisters of Charity. They were ' to consist of girls, and widows unencumbered with children, destined to seek out the poor in the alleys and streets of cities. They were to have for monastery the houses of the sick ; for cell, a hired room ; for their chapel, the parish church ; for their cloister, the streets of the town or the wards of the hospital ; for enclosure, obedience ; for grating, the fear of God ; for veil, holy modesty.'* The genesis of the Slum Sisters is

* The Little Sisters of the Assumption, who have houses in London, as a matter of fact were founded within late years exclusively to nurse and work for the poor in their own homes. They are debarred from going to any but the entirely destitute who can procure no other help.

evident. It would appear that we have forgotten what manner of men we are ; let us look, then, into this Salvation glass and see. When Professor Huxley incidentally compared the Salvation Army to the Franciscans, in an article in the *Pall Mall*, I took up the comparison with alacrity, and extended it.

The very chivalrous militarism of St Francis has been caught and vulgarized in the outward military symbolism of the Salvation Army. That joyous spirit which St Francis so peculiarly fostered is claimed by General Booth as an integral and essential feature in his own followers. The street-preaching, in which the Salvationists are so energetic, received its first special extension from the Franciscans. Mother of street-preaching, where are your street-preachers ? To gather the multitude into our churches something more than the sound of a bell has become necessary ; let us go forth into the highways and byways like the Franciscan Friars of old. And it is for the Friars to do it. The priest, worn almost to breaking by the cares of his own poor parish, has no strength or time to go forth among that nomad population which is of no parish and of all parishes. Why should the Franciscans hide behind their caricatures ? The scarf and scarlet jersey is crying in street, in slum-dwelling, in common lodging-house, such God's truth as is in it to cry ; where is the brown frock and the cord ?

But the preaching Friar can only subserve a

portion of the uses subserved by the Salvation Army. Consider what the Salvation Army is. It is not merely a sect, it is virtually a Religious Order, but a Religious Order of a peculiar kind. It consists of men and women living in the world the life of the world, pursuing their businesses, marrying, bringing up families; yet united by rule and discipline, and pushing forward active work of charity and religious influence among the forsaken poor. It possesses, moreover, the advantage of numerous recruits from the ranks of the poor, through whom it can obtain intimate knowledge of the condition and requirements of their class.

May it be that here, too, the Salvation Army has but studied St Francis? Here, too, has the Assisian left us a weapon which but needs a little practice to adapt it to the necessity of the day? Even so. Our army is in the midst of us, enrolled under the banner of the Stigmata, quartered throughout the kingdom; an army over 13,000 strong, following the barrack routine of religious peace, diligently pipe-claying its spiritual accoutrements, practising what that other Army calls 'knee-drill,' turning out for periodical inspection, and dreaming of no conflict at hand. Sound to it the trumpet. Sound to the militia of Assisi that the enemy is about them, that they must take the field; sound to the Tertiaries of St Francis. Yes, the Franciscan Tertiaries are this army. They are men and women who live in the world the life of the world—though not

a worldly life; who marry, rear their families, attend to their worldly vocations; yet they are a Religious Order, with rule and observance. They include numbers of men and women among the poor. Nay, the resemblance extends to minor matters. Like the Salvationists, they exact from their women plainness of dress; though unlike the Salvationists, and most like their Poet-founder, they do not exact ugliness of dress. Like the Salvationists, again, they are an essentially democratic body: a Tertiary peeress, writing to a Tertiary factory girl, addresses her as 'sister.'

It rests with themselves to complete the resemblance in the one point now lacking. They are saying their Office, holding their monthly meetings, sanctifying themselves; it is excellent, but only half that for which their Founder destined them. He intended them likewise for active works of charity. They are the Third Order of St Francis; their founder's spirit should be theirs; and with the ecstatic of Alverno, contemplation was never allowed to divert him from activity. He who penanced Brother Ruffino because the visionary was overpowering in him the worker, with what alacrity would he have thrown his Tertiaries on the battle-field where reserves are so needed; with what alacrity would he have bidden them come down from Alverno, and descend into the streets! Nay, Pope Leo XIII, as if he had foreseen the task which might call upon them,

has released them from the weight of fasts and prayers which burdened them, reducing their fasts to two in the year, their prayers to twelve daily *Paters* and *Aves*. They are freed from their spiritual austerities, and at liberty for external labours. They, therefore, if their founder live at all in them, seem the organization ready constituted for this work. In whatever town there was a Congregation of Tertiaries, they would endeavour to combine for the establishment of Shelters, and whatever, in the process of development, might ultimately grow out of them.

Let us, then, put this thing to the test, in God's name! And, except in God's name, it were indeed wanton to try it. It may fail, true; it may be much of a leap in the dark, true; but every community must make its leaps in the dark, and make them often for far less clamorous cause. We English at large were nigh on bringing our Home Rule prodigy to birth; though astrologers hardly cast its horoscope alike, though there were not wanting prophets who boded the apparition of an armed head from our seething Irish cauldron. But long and crying suffering waited redress, we had tried palliatives which fell short, and we had all but determined (wisely, I think, determined) to test a heroic remedy. Here, at your own lintel, is long and crying suffering, worse than that of the Irish peasant, who has at least the consolation of his God, his priest, his neighbour, and his conscience; here, too, you have tried palliatives

which have fallen short ; here, too, then, venture a heroic remedy. The most disastrous daring is better in such a matter than but-too-certainly-disastrous quiescence. I do not like Mohammed, but I like less Moloch : the code of the Koran is ill ; is the code of Cotytto better ? But to this it shall not come.

Things hard, not unachievable, I have set before you, children of Assisi ; not unachievable, much less unattemptable. Scorn you may have, contumely you may have : but witness that these Salvationists, being of a verity blind prophets, yet endured all this ; and you, who know whereof you prophesy, shall you not endure it ? Can men conjure in the ways with the name of Booth, and not with the name of Manning ? If they are shielded by the red jersey, you shall be shielded by the reflex of that princely red at Westminster. But rather will I cry to you, lineage of Alverno : Gird on your weakness as a hauberk of proof ! *They* have grown strong because they were weak, and esteemed because they were despised ; you shall grow stronger because weaker, and more esteemed because more despised. What sword have they, but you have a keener ? For blood and fire, gentle humility ; for the joy of a religious alcoholism, the joy of that peace which passeth understanding ; for the tumults, the depths of the spirit ; for the discipline of trumpets, the discipline of the Sacraments ; for the chiming of tambourines, Mary's name pensile like a bell-tongue in men's

resonant souls ; for hearts clashed open by a whirlwind, the soft summons of Him Who stands at the door and knocks. If with these you cannot conquer, then you could not with chariots and horsemen.

II

THIS is a day which, with all its admitted and most lamentable evils, many of us are most glad that we have lived to see: for it is a day wherein a bad old order is fast giving place to a new ; and the new, we trust, through whatever struggle and gradual transformation, will finally prove a higher order than the old. Free education is in the air. It is one among many signs of the common tendency. It involves the negation of individualism. The hearts of men are softening to each other : we will no longer suffer unchecked the rehatched ' dragons of the prime ' : many minds, with many thoughts, many aims, are uniting with a common watch-word against a common foe.

> We, are we not formed as notes of music are
> For one another, though dissimilar ?

We are raising from the dust a fallen standard of Christianity : not in phrase merely, but in practice, not by lips only, but by lives also, we are re-affirming the Brotherhood of Man.

Rousseau said it. But so did Jesus Christ. It is the doctrine of the red cap. But it is likewise the doctrine of the red cassock. While on the antagonistic side is the conspicuous and significant figure of Professor Huxley, the map of life is crumpled between the convolutions of Darwin's brain : he cannot so much as attack Rousseau-ism, without unconsciously postulating as his argumentative basis the omnigenous truth of Darwinism. Now, Individualism was simply Natural Selection applied to the social order.

The Individualist theory had its scaffolding of excellence ; O let us confess it ! The walls of no theory can rise far from the ground without that. Our neighbours have this in common with heaven—they only help those who are perfectly able to help themselves. In the days when the blatant beast of Individualism held the field, that was a truth. It is now almost a cynicism—a cynicism with the whiff of truth which makes most cynicisms piquant; but, thank God, fast becoming cynicism. This was the scaffolding whereby the Individualist edifice arose ; the precept, always true within rigid limitations and safeguards, of self-help. But, in practice, the script of self-help has been the script of selfishness, has been the maxim of Cain ; in practice, self-help has meant ' devil take the hindmost.' By its fruits you shall know it. Look at your darkest England ; look at your darkest London. Zohar-snakes which guard

the flesh they grow from ; your Goths, O Rome of the sea-ways, your Goths within your own gates. You have sown your dragon's teeth, and you shall reap—armed men ? Nay, I tell you, but dragons. From dragon's teeth, dragons; and from devil's teaching, devils. His evangel you have preached, by word and deed, throughout this century ; do you fear his kingdom at hand ? You have prepared the way of your lord, you have made straight his paths ; and now you tremble at his coming. For diabolical this doctrine of Individualism is ; it is the outcome of the proud teaching which declares it despicable for men to bow before their fellow-men. It has meant, not that a man should be individual, but that he should be independent. Now this I take to be an altogether deadly lie. A man *should* be individual, but not independent. The very laws of Nature forbid independence, which have made man in a thousand ways inevitably dependent on his fellows.

Vain is the belief that man can convert to permanent evil that which is in itself good. It has been sought to do so with science ; and some of us have been seriously frightened at science. Folly. Certain temporary evil has been wrought through it in the present, which seems very great because it *is* present. That will pass, the good will remain ; and men will wonder how they with whom was truth could ever have feared research. Scientists, those eyeless worms

who loosen the soil for the crops of God, have declared that they are proving miracles false, because they are contrary to the laws of Nature. I can see that in fifty years' time they will have proved miracles true, because they are based on the laws of Nature. So much good, at least, will come from the researches of Nancy and the Charité, of the followers of Bernheim and the followers of Charcot. If any, being evil, offer to us good things, I say: Take; for ours must be the ultimate harvest from them. Good steel wins in the hands that can wield it longest; and those hands are ours.

No scheme, be it General Booth's or another's, will avail to save more than a fraction —may it be a large fraction—out of that drift of adult misery wherewith the iniquitous neglect of our forefathers has encumbered the streets. But the children! There is the chance; there, alas, also is the fear. Think of it! If Christ stood amidst your London slums, He could not say: 'Except ye become as one of *these* little children.' For better your children were cast from the bridges of London than they should become as one of those little ones. Could they be gathered together and educated in the truest sense of the word; could the children of the nation at large be so educated as to cut off future recruits to the ranks of Darkest England; then it would need no astrology to cast the horoscope of to-morrow. *La tête de l'homme du peuple*, or rather, *de l'enfant du peuple*—around

that sways the conflict. Who grasps the child grasps the future.

The grim old superstition was right. When man would build to a lasting finish, he must found his building over a child. There is not a secret society in Europe, there is not a Secularist in France, in Germany, in Italy, in England, but knows it; everywhere these gangs of coiners are at their work of stamping and uttering base humanity. We, too, have recognized it; we on our part have not been idle, we least of all; but we are hard put to it for labourers in the task. In the school-satchel lie the keys of to-morrow. What gate shall be opened into that morrow, whether a gate of horn, or the gate of ivory wherethrough the inheritors of our own poor day passed surrounded by so many vain dreams into their inheritance, must rest with them who are still

> In that sweet age
> When Heaven's our side the lark.

THE FOURTH ORDER OF HUMANITY

IN the beginning of things came man, sequent to him woman ; on woman followed the child, and on the child the doll. It is a climax of development ; and the crown of these is the doll.

To the doll's supremacy in beauty woman's self bears testimony, implicit, if unconscious. For ages has she tricked her face in pigment, and her brows in alien hair ; her *contours* she has filled to counterfeit roundness, her eyes and lashes tinged : and all in a frustrate essay to compass by Art what in the doll is right of Nature. Even the child exhibits distinct inferiorities. It is full of thwartness and eating and drinking, and selffulness (selfishness were a term too dully immitigate), and a plentiful lack of that repose wherein the doll is nearest to the quiet gods. For my own part, I profess that much acquaintance only increases my consideration for this fourth order of humanity : always excepting the very light-blue-eyed doll, in whose regard there is a certain chill *hauteur* against which my diffidence is not proof.

Consider the life of dolls. At the whim of some *debonair* maternal tyranness, they veer on every wind of mutability ; are the sport of imputed moods, suffer qualities over which they have no election,—are sorry or glad, indocile

or amiable, at their mistress' whim and mandate ; they are visited with stripes, or the soft aspersion of kisses ; with love delectably persecuted, or consigned to the clement quiet of neglect ; exalted to the dimple of their mistress' cheek, or dejected to the servile floor ; rent and mutilated, or rocked and murmured over ; blamed or petted, be-rated or loved. Nor why it is thus or thus with them, are they any wise witting ; wherefore these things should be, they know not at all.

> Consider the life of us—
> Oh, my cousins the dolls !

Some consciousness, I take it, there was ; some secret sense of this occult co-rivalry in fate, which withheld me even in childhood from the youthful male's contempt for these short-lived parasites of the nursery. I questioned, with wounded feelings, the straitened feminine intolerance which said to the boy : ' Thou shalt not hold a baby ; thou shalt not possess a doll.' In the matter of babies, I was hopeless to shake the illiberal prejudice ; in the matter of dolls, I essayed to confound it. By eloquence and fine diplomacy I wrung from my sisters a concession of dolls ; whence I date my knowledge of the kind.

But ineluctible sex declared itself. I dramatized them, I fell in love with them ; I did not father them ; intolerance was justified of its children. One in particular I selected, one with

surpassing fairness crowned, and bowed before the fourteen inches of her skirt. She was beautiful. She was one of Shakespeare's heroines. She was an amity of inter-removed miracles; all wrangling excellencies at pact in one sole doll; the frontiers of jealous virtues marched in her, yet trespassed not against her peace. I desired for her some worthy name; and asked of my mother: Who was the fairest among living women? Laughingly was I answered that I was a hard questioner, but that perhaps the Empress of the French bore the bell for beauty. Hence, accordingly, my Princess of puppetdom received her style; and at this hour, though she has long since vanished to some realm where all sawdust is wiped for ever from dolls' wounds, I cannot hear that name but the Past touches me with a rigid agglomeration of small china fingers.

But why with childhood and with her should I close the blushing recital of my puppet-loves? Men are but children of a larger growth; and your statue, I warrant me, is but your crescent doll. Wherefore, then, should I leave unmemorized the statue which thralled my youth in a passion such as feminine mortality was skill-less to instigate? Nor at this let any boggle; for *she* was a goddess. Statue I have called her; but indeed she was a bust, a head, a face—and who that saw that face could have thought to regard further? She stood nameless in the gallery of sculptural casts which she

strangely deigned to inhabit ; but I have since learned that men called her the Vatican Melpomene. Rightly stood she nameless, for Melpomene she never was : never went words of hers from bronzèd lyre in tragic order ; never through *her* enspelled lips moaned any syllables of woe. Rather, with her leaf-twined locks, she seemed some strayed Bacchante, indissolubly filmed in secular reverie. The expression which gave her divinity resistless I have always suspected for an accident of the cast ; since in frequent engravings of her prototype I never met any such aspect. The secret of this indecipherable significance, I slowly discerned, lurked in the singularly diverse set of the two corners of the mouth ; so that her profile wholly shifted its meaning according as it was viewed from the right or left. In one corner of her mouth the little languorous firstling of a smile had gone to sleep ; as if she had fallen a-dream, and forgotten that it was there. The other had drooped, as of its own listless weight, into a something which guessed at sadness ; guessed, but so as indolent lids are easily grieved by the pricks of the slate-blue dawn. And on the full countenance those two expressions blended to a single expression inexpressible ; as if pensiveness had played the Mænad, and now her arms grew heavy under the cymbals. Thither each evening, as twilight fell, I stole to meditate and worship the baffling mysteries of her meaning : as twilight fell, and the blank noon surceased

arrest upon her life, and in the vaguening countenance the eyes broke out from their day-long ambuscade. Eyes of violet blue, drowsed-amorous, which surveyed me not, but looked ever beyond, where a spell enfixed them,

Waiting for something, not for me.

And I was content. Content; for by such tenure of unnoticedness I knew that I held my privilege to worship: had she beheld me, she would have denied, have contemned my gaze. Between us, now, are years and tears: but the years waste her not, and the tears wet her not; neither misses she me or any man. There, I think, she is standing yet; there, I think, she will stand for ever: the divinity of an accident, awaiting a divine thing impossible, which can never come to her, and she knows this not.

For I reject the vain fable that the ambrosial creature is really an unspiritual compound of lime, which the gross ignorant call plaster of Paris. If Paris indeed had to do with her, it was he of Ida. And for him, perchance, she waits.

FORM AND FORMALISM

MANY think in the head; but it is the thinking in the heart that is most wanted. Theology and philosophy are the soul of truth; but they must be clothed with flesh, to create an organism which can come down and live among men. Therefore Christ became incarnate, to create Christianity. Be it spoken with reverence, a great poet, for example, who is likewise a great thinker, does for truth what Christ did for God, the Supreme Truth. And though the world may be loath to admit it, the saint does for truth even more; for he gives to truth his own flesh. What of the man who—like the illustrious English Canon of Loreto—should be poet and saint? Ah, 'hard and rarest union' indeed! for he is a twofold incarnation of truth. He gives to it one body which has the life of man, another which has the life of humanity and the diuturnal hills.

This is a concrete example of an abstract principle—the supreme necessity under which truth is bound to give itself a definite shape. Of such immutable importance is form that without this effigy and witness of spirit, spirit walks invisible among men. Yet, except in literature (and possibly in art), where a materialistic worship of form curiously prevails, form is a special object of the age's blasphemy. In politics, music, society, ethics, the cry is: '*Dirumpamus vincula eorum!*' I am led to this

reflection by the strange miscomprehensions which have beset even so wise and sympathetic a teacher as Mr Ruskin, when he has touched on Religious Orders; and the passage which led to it is a passage in one of his most wise and charming books, the *Ethics of the Dust*.

> 'Half the monastic system,' he says, 'rose out of the notion of future reward acting on the occult pride and ambition of good people. . . . There is always a considerable quantity of pride, to begin with, in what is called "giving oneself to God." As if one had ever belonged to anybody else! . . . When it had become the principal amusement, and the most admired art, of Christian men, to cut one another's throats, and burn one another's towns, of course the few feeble or reasonable persons left, who desired quiet, safety, and kind fellowship, got into cloisters; and the gentlest, thoughtfullest, noblest men and women shut themselves up, precisely where they could be of least use.'

It is a most representative passage, for many reasons. Mr Ruskin is, as he truly says, a witness favourable to the monasteries. So it comes about that his words represent not mere Protestant prejudice, but the current secular prejudice of the age. 'All the good people,' as he says further on, 'getting themselves hung up out of the way of mischief.' That then, as now, it was only the minority, even of 'good people,' who became monks; that, numerous though monks were, the world must have been in a worse way than in the days

of Sodom and Gomorrah, if these were all its just; that the majority of monks by no means let the world slide, but very actively combated it;—on all this a professed thinker might have been expected to think.

But confine monasticism if you will, to contemplative monasticism. Not by the good in general, but by the good with a contemplative bent, are contemplative Orders entered. Is it unlawful to lead the life contemplative, only when the object of contemplation is God? Was Wordsworth right, St Bernard wrong? Or does Mr Ruskin consider the poet's contemplation fruitful, but the saint's unfruitful? Yes, there is the root of it; and there again is Mr Ruskin representative. The modern world profoundly and hopelessly disbelieves the power of prayer. It is not always scornful, this modern world; it simply does not comprehend, and is doubtful whether anything may lawfully be supposed to exist which it cannot comprehend. Yet I would sooner be prayed for by John of Patmos than written for by John of Coniston.

But Mr Ruskin's words indicate that not only the Religious Orders, but the Religious life itself is held by him 'suspect.' In what is called 'giving oneself to God' he sees pride. He desires life, in fact, to be religious without the form of religion; even as, in his own later tendencies, he has apparently aimed to be a Catholic without Catholic belief. One sees this revolt from form, with its inevitable con-

sequences, in his teaching and in his thought. In his teaching, which is full of insulated and capricious beauty, but has little unity beyond that of his own individuality. And that makes artistic, not ethical, unity. In his thought, which is often strangely unprecise. He can, for instance, as the basis of his diatribe against monasticism, assert that ' nothing is ever done so as really to please our Great Father, unless we would also have done it, though we had had no Father to know of it.' Why,then,are we to do it ? ' Because it is right,' Mr Ruskin implies. Which is so dearly fine in sound, that it is a pity it should be so childishly empty in sense. We are not to do a thing for the pleasure of God ; but we are to do it because it is right—i.e., the pleasure of God. For what is right, but the pleasure of God ? If Mr Ruskin had asked himself that question, he would not have spun this Penelope-web. It is an example, not of thinking in the heart (which I have averred to be so much needed), but of thinking *with* the heart, which is quite another thing, and the peculiar curse of sentimentalists.

But in such utterances, and in his protest against the formal ' giving oneself to God,' Mr Ruskin has latter-day feeling at his back. Formalism is the repressor of vitality : therefore let us away with form. Let us all stop short where the young man stopped, who went to Christ for a counsel of perfection, and departed sad at heart. When a maid takes a man

to husband, she goes forth from her father's house; and none cries out upon the inhuman sundering of family ties by the relentless system of marriage. But when a soul takes Christ to husband, and goes forth from her father's house, we will cry, like them that cried Diana great. Christ alone we admit not to have His spouse all to Himself. Without form, formalism is impossible; then let us give short shrift to dogma! The letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth; then let us have the Essence without the Word!

What, you builders of futurity! You will have life, yet not form? Such thing is not known to man as life without form. To avoid formalism by destroying form, is to remedy carnality by committing suicide. You have the spirit freed from the letter then, with a vengeance; but the spirit, somehow, no longer quickens. Yet may not form change? Yes, in so far as the life changes, not otherwise. The Church is like man's body: which grows to completion altering or adding a little in superficialities and details of figure, but unchanging in essential line and structure. Each bone, muscle, nerve, and blood-vessel, though it have increase, is in form, position, and constitution immutable. And with the Church, also, which is Christ's body, you may add in non-essentials, you may develop in essentials; but you shall not alter in essentials by so much as a clause of its dogmatic theology. 'That the Scripture may

be fulfilled: You shall not break a bone of Him.'

In things more general, the same confusion of form with its abuse, the same uncomprehending iconoclasm, is patent. What is the widest ideal of this age? 'The parliament of man, the federation of the world.' Universal federation, in government or in no government, in religion or in no religion. And the decided tendency of what are called 'popular leaders' is towards federation with the minimum of government, and no religion. Yet when it comes (as come I believe it will), it can only be federation in both government and religion of plenary and ordered dominance. I see only two religions constant enough to effect this: each based upon the past—which is stability; each growing according to an interior law—which is strength. Paganism and Christianism; the religion of the queen of heaven* who is Astarte, and of the queen of heaven who is Mary.

'Under which king?' For under a king it must be, not merely a flag. No common aim can triumph, till it is crystallized in an individual, at once its child and ruler. Man himself must become incarnate in a man before his cause can triumph. Thus the universal Word became the individual Christ; that total God

* 'We offer sacrifice to the queen of heaven.' (Jer. xliv, 19.) The Phœnicians represented Astarte with a veil blown out by the wind, and the crescent moon under her feet.

and total man being particularized in a single symbol, the cause of God and man might triumph. In Christ, therefore, centres and is solved that supreme problem of life—the marriage of the Unit with the Sum. In Him is perfectly shown forth the All for one and One for all, which is the justificatory essence of that substance we call Kingship ; and from which, in so far as each particular kingship derogates, it forfeits justificatory right. When the new heavens and the new earth, which multitudinous Titans are so restlessly forging, at length stand visible to resting man, it needs no prophecy to foretell that they will be like the old, with head, and form, and hierarchic memberment, as the six-foot bracken is like the bracken at your knee. For out of all its disintegrations and confusion earth emerges, like a strong though buffeted swimmer, nearer to the unseen model and term of all social growth ; which is the civil constitution of angeldom, and Uranian statecraft of imperatorial God.

NATURE'S IMMORTALITY

IN the days when days were fable, before the grim Tartar fled from Cathay,* or the hardy Goth from the shafted Tartar; before the hardy Goth rolled on the hot Kelt, or the hot Kelt on Italy; before the wolf-cubs lolled tongues of prey, or Rhodian galleys sheered the brine, an isle there was which has passed into the dreams of men, itself

Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

* [This passage Francis Thompson translated into verse, as the Prologue of a Pastoral that was, however, never finished.]

Ere the fierce Tartar fled Cathay,
  The stark Goth shafted Tartary,
The fiery Kelt the Gothic fray,—
  And the Kelt rolled on Italy;
Ere the wolf-cubs lolled tongues of prey,
  Or Rhodian galleys sheered the sea,
An isle there was—where is't to-day?—
  The Muses called it Sicily.
Was it, and is it not?—Aye me,
Where's Eden, or Taprobane?

Where now does old Simæthus flow?
  You take a map (great Poesy,
Have they mapped Heaven!) and thereon show—
  What?—the dust-heap of Italy!
The Ausonian mainland from its toe
  Spurns it aside contemptuously.
You point to it, you man that know,
  And this, you say, is Sicily.
I know not how the thing may be—
It is not Sicily to me!

And when the Muses talked, they named it Sicily. Was it, and is it not? Alas, where's Eden, or Taprobane? Where flows Alpheus now? You take a map (great Poetry! have they mapped Heaven?) and show me—what? The dust-heap of Italy; a thing spurned contemptuously from the toe of the Ausonian mainland; you point to it, you man of knowledge, and this, you say, is Sicily. You may be right, I know not; but it is not Sicily to me.

Yet that olden Sicily could not, cannot pass. Dew but your eyes with the euphrasy of fancy, and purge your ears with the poet's singing; then, to the ear within the ear, and the eye within the eye, shall come the green of the ever-vernal forests, the babble of the imperishable streams. For within this life of ache and dread, like the greenness in the rain, like the solace in the tear, we may have each of us a dreamful Sicily. And since we can project it where we will, for me, seeking those same 'sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing,' for me perchance, Sicily may be Little Cloddington.

What balm, then, for hurt minds has my Sicily? In the old Sicily, 'Shepherds piped on oaten straws,' and the inhabitants were entirely worthy of their surroundings. But that cultivating influence of beauty which our æsthetes preach has somehow broken down in the case of Little Cloddington, and one begins to have an uneasy suspicion that the constant imbibing of beauty, like the constant imbibing of wine,

dulls the brain which it is supposed to stimulate. Yet, to commune with the heart of Nature—this has been the accredited mode since the days of Wordsworth. Nature, Coleridge assures us, has ministrations by which she heals her erring and distempered child ; and it is notorious how effectual were her ministrations in the case of Coleridge.

Well, she is a very lovely Nature in this Sicily of mine ; yet I confess a heinous doubt whether rustic stolidity may not be a secret effluence from her. You speak, and you think she answers you. It is the echo of your own voice. You think you hear the throbbing of her heart, and it is the throbbing of your own. I do not believe that Nature has a heart ; and I suspect that, like many another beauty, she has been credited with a heart because of her face. You go to her, this great, beautiful, tranquil, self-satisfied Nature, and you look for—sympathy ? Yes ; the sympathy of a cat, sitting by the fire and blinking at you. What, indeed, does she want with a heart or brain ? She knows that she is beautiful, and she is placidly content with the knowledge ; she was made to be gazed on, and she fulfils the end of her creation. After a careful anatomization of Nature, I pronounce that she has nothing more than a lymphatic vesicle. She cannot give what she does not need ; and if we were but similarly organized, we should be independent of sympathy. A man cannot go straight to his objects, because he has a

heart ; he cannot eat, drink, sleep, make money, and be satisfied, because he has a heart. It is a mischievous thing, and wise men accordingly take the earliest opportunity of giving it away.

Yet the thing is, after all, too deep for jest. What is this heart of Nature, if it exist at all ? Is it, according to the conventional doctrine derived from Wordsworth and Shelley, a heart of love, according with the heart of man, and stealing out to him through a thousand avenues of mute sympathy ? No ; in this sense I repeat seriously what I said lightly : Nature has no heart.

I sit now, alone and melancholy, with that melancholy which comes to all of us when the waters of sad knowledge have left their ineffaceable delta in the soul. As I write, a calm, faint-tinted evening sky sinks like a nestward bird to its sleep. At a little distance is a dark wall of fir-wood ; while close at hand a small group of larches rise like funeral plumes against that tranquil sky, and seem to say, ' Night cometh.' They alone are in harmony with me. All else speaks to me of a beautiful, peaceful world in which I have no part. And did I go up to yonder hill, and behold at my feet the spacious amphitheatre of hill-girt wood and mead, overhead the mighty aerial *velarium*, I should feel that my human sadness was a higher and deeper and wider thing than all. O Titan Nature ! a petty race, which has dwarfed its spirit in dwellings, and bounded

it in selfish shallows of art, may find you too vast, may shrink from you into its earths: but though you be a very large thing, and my heart a very little thing, yet Titan as you are, my heart is too great for you. Coleridge—speaking, not as Wordsworth had taught him to speak, but from his own bitter experience—said the truth:

> O Lady! we receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does Nature live:
> Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
>
> . . . .
>
> I may not hope from outward forms to win
> The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

The truth, in relation to ourselves; though not the truth with regard to Nature absolutely. Absolute Nature lives not in our life, nor yet is lifeless, but lives in the life of God: and in so far, and so far merely, as man himself lives in that life, does he come into sympathy with Nature, and Nature with him. She is God's daughter, who stretches her hand only to her Father's friends. Not Shelley, not Wordsworth himself, ever drew so close to the heart of Nature as did the Seraph of Assisi, who was close to the Heart of God.

Yet higher, yet further let us go. Is this daughter of God mortal; can her foot not pass the grave? Is Nature, as men tell us, but a veil concealing the Eternal,

> A fold
> Of Heaven and earth across His Face,

which we must rend to behold that Face ? Do our eyes indeed close for ever on the beauty of earth when they open on the beauty of Heaven ? I think not so ; I would fain beguile even death itself with a sweet fantasy, if it be no more than fantasy : I believe that in Heaven is earth. Plato's doctrine of Ideals, as I conceive, laid its hand upon the very breast of truth, yet missed her breathing. For beauty —such is my faith—is beauty for eternity.

If the Trinity were not revealed, I should nevertheless be induced to suspect the existence of such a master-key by the trinities through which expounds itself the spirit of man. Such a trinity is the trinity of beauty—Poetry, Art, Music. Although its office is to create beauty, I call it the trinity of beauty, because it is the property of earthly as of the heavenly beauty to create everything to its own image and likeness. Painting is the eye of passion, Poetry is the voice of passion, Music is the throbbing of her heart. For all beauty is passionate, though it may be a passionless passion. So absolutely are these three the distinct manifestations of a single essence that, in considering the general operation of any one of them we consider the general operation of all ; and hence, as most easily understood because most definitely objective in its result, I take Art. Not the so-called Art which aims at the mere photographic representation of external objects, for that can only reproduce ; but the creative Art

which alone is one essence with Poetry and Music.

In the artist's creation there are two distinct stages or processes, the second of which is but a revelation of the first. There is the ideal and the image of the ideal, the painting. To be more exact I should distinguish an intermediate stage, only theoretically separable in order of process from the first stage, with which it is, or may be, practically synchronous. There is first the ideal, secondly the mental image of the ideal (i.e., the picture of it in form and colour formed on the mental eye*), thirdly the external or objective reproduction of the mental image in material form and colour, in pigments. Now of these three stages, which is the most perfect creation, and therefore the most beautiful? They lessen in perfection as they become material; the ideal is the most perfect; the mental image less perfect; the objective image, the painting, least perfect.

'But,' you say, 'this ideal is an abstract thing, without real existence.' The commonest of errors, that the ideal is the unreal; and the more pernicious because founded on a truth. It is impossible to speak here with the distinctions and modifications necessary for accuracy; but generally I may say this:—The

* *On the mental eye.*—I use the popular expression. In reality this image is as really, as physically (I do not say as vividly) seen as is a ray of sunlight. It is therefore material, not spiritual. But this is not the place for a physiological discussion, and the popular phrase subserves my object, if it does not subserve accuracy.

reality of the artist's ideal is not the reality of, e.g., a star ; for one is man's creation, the other directly from God. Nor is the reality of the artist's ideal the same in kind as the reality of its objective image, of the painting. The one exists externally, and the senses are cognizant of it ; the other within his spirit, and the senses can take no account of it. Yet both are real, actual. If there be an advantage, it is not on the side of the painting ; for in no true sense can the image be more real than the thing imaged. I admit that in man the ideal has not the continuous vividness of its objective image. The ideal may be dimmed or even forgotten ; though I hold that in such a case it is merely put away from spiritual cognizance as the painting might be put out of physical sight, and that it still exists in the soul. But were the artist omniscient, so that he could hold all things in perpetual and simultaneous contemplation, the ideal would have an existence as unintermittent as that of the painting, and, unlike that of the painting, coeval with the artist's soul.

In Painting and Music the same thing holds good. In both there is the conception (a term perhaps less suggesting unreality than the term 'ideal') with its material expression ; and between these two stages a mental expression which the material expression cannot realize. The mental expression in its turn cannot represent all the qualities of the conception ; and

the conception, whose essence is the same in all three arts, has a subtlety which the expressional union of all three could not adequately render, because expression never fully expresses. Yet (and it is on this that I insist) the conception is an actually existent thing, an existence within an existence, real as the spirit in which it exists, *the* reality of which the objective reality is but the necessarily less perfect image, and transcending in beauty the image as body is transcended by soul. Can it be adequately revealed by one mortal to another? No. Could it be so revealed? Yes. If the spirit of man were untrammelled by his body, conception could be communicated by the interpenetration of soul and soul.

Let us apply this.* The Supreme Spirit, creating, reveals His conceptions to man in the material forms of Nature. There is no necessity here for any intermediate process, because nobody obstructs the free passage of conception into expression. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Painter; and straightway over the eternal dikes rush forth the flooding tides of night, the blue of Heaven ripples into stars; Nature, from Alp to Alpine flower, rises lovely with the betrayal of the Divine thought. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Poet; and there

* Be it observed that I am not trying to *explain* anything, metaphysically or otherwise, and consequently my language is not to be taken metaphysically. I am merely endeavouring analogically to *suggest* an idea. And the whole thing is put forward as a fantasy, which the writer likes to think may be a dim shadowing of truth.

chimes the rhythm of an ordered universe. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Musician; and Creation vibrates with the harmony, from the palpitating throat of the bird to the surges of His thunder as they burst in fire along the roaring strand of Heaven; nay, as Coleridge says,

> The silent air
> Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

Earthly beauty is but heavenly beauty taking to itself flesh. Yet, though this objective presentment of the Divine Ideal be relatively more perfect than any human presentment of a human ideal, though it be the most flawless of possible embodiments; yet is even the Divine embodiment transcendently inferior to the Divine Ideal.

Within the Spirit Who is Heaven lies Earth; for within Him rests the great conception of Creation. There are the woods, the streams, the meads, the hills, the seas that we have known in life, but breathing indeed 'an ampler ether, a diviner air,' themselves beautiful with a beauty which, for even the highest created spirit utterly to apprehend were 'swooning destruction.'

> Yet there the soul shall enter which hath earned
> That privilege by virtue.

As in the participation of human spirits some are naturally more qualified for interpenetration

than others—in ordinary language, as one man is more able than his fellows to enter into another's mind, so in proportion as each of us by virtue has become kin to God, will he penetrate the Supreme Spirit, and identify himself with the Divine Ideals. There is the immortal Sicily, there the Elysian Fields, there all visions, all fairness engirdled with the Eternal Fair. This, my faith, is laid up in my bosom.

SANCTITY AND SONG

THREE Canticles are assigned to St Francis in his collected writings. It is dubious whether they are actually his; it is not dubious that they are early Franciscan work. Of these, the *Canticle of the Sun* is well known, and generally admired. The other two, which are never likely to win general admiration, may or may not be the work of the Saint, but certainly they are the work of *a* saint, and a saint admitted to the highest privileges of Divine Love. The manifest personal experience which notes them, the intimate secrets of that experience, are sufficient proofs of this. Because of that intimate secrecy of personal experience it is that I have said they are never likely to be generally admired. 'The fool,' says Lord Verulam, 'the fool receives not the words of the wise, unless thou speakest the things that are in his heart.' And not only the fool. By the law of Nature, no man can admire, for no man can understand, that of which he has no echo in himself. Such an echo implies an experience kindred, if not equal, to that of the utterer. Now, to the majority of men, Saintship is an uncomprehended word,

> A doubtful tale from fairyland,
> Hard for the non-elect to understand.

Tell them its meaning, and your words will be to them a sound, signifying nothing. Saintship

is the touch of God. To most, even good people, God is a belief. To the saints He is an embrace. They have felt the wind of His locks, His Heart has beaten against their side. They do not believe in Him, for they know Him.

Therefore to the many these Canticles must seem strained and fantastic things, touching in them no corresponding realities of their own experience. If it is hard for such men to seize the aloofness of the purely lyrical poet, how much harder for them to seize the aloofness of the lyrical saint! Take the first of the two Canticles to which I have referred. Saint Francis recounts the purifying struggles of Divine Love under the image of a warfare with Christ. Christ strikes him with dart and lance, overwhelms him with stones, until he falls with pierced heart, dying on the ground.

> But lo! I did not die;
> For my belovèd Lord,
> To crown His victory,
> My life anew restored,
> So keen and fresh that I
> That moment could have soared
> To join the saints on high.

How many will see in this finely daring allegory anything but the bizarre and tortured fancy of an 'ascetic'—word of reprobation! Yet mark. A young poet has recently revived in happy verse a mediæval fable—'Le Chevalier Malheur.' He is encountered by an armed

knight, who overthrows him, and then, as his 'poor heart lies dead,' pierces his bosom and thrusts in a gauntleted hand. Whereupon

> A new, a noble heart
> Within me woke.

The coincidence is striking ; but it is the result of both poems being based upon a fact of human nature. The purifying power of suffering was known even to the heathen. In the Egyptian obsequies, the removal of the most perishable parts of the body, the preservation of the rest by steeping and burning nitre, signified the cleansing of the human being by pain ; and the symbolism was emphasized by the words spoken over the embalmed corpse : 'Thou art pure, Osiris, thou art pure.'

Now grace does not supersede, but acts along the lines of, Nature. This mysterious strife of the soul with Christ is manifestly prefigured in the Old Testament by the struggle of Jacob with the angel. Yet St Francis has a higher mystery to symbolize. Revivified and strengthened, he hastens again to the heavenly contest, and in that final strife,

> I conquered Christ my Lord ;

he has passed beyond the ken of profane eyes ; to saints and a few readers of the mystics only is the meaning of that final triumphant image known. 'My dwelling,' says Wisdom, 'is in a pillar of a cloud.'

The second Canticle, less profoundly mystical, is perhaps to many even more profoundly unreal. It emphasizes the fire and torments of that Love which the Saint has rashly tempted—to find, alas! that the gates of the beatific Love are guarded by the purgatorial Love.

> Though held, I run; I rise, yet fall;
> I speak, though mute I am become;
> Pursue, and am pursued withal.
> O Love eternal, why
> Am I a fool for Thee?
> Wherefore hast Thou cast me
> In such a fire to die?

Christ answers in rebuke: Francis suffers because his love has broken rule, within which Charity, like all other virtues, should contain itself. Then, with a daring born of the love which casteth out fear, the Saint turns on his Lord, and tells Him that his own follies are Christ's, since Christ is transformed to him: nay, no folly to which love can lead him may equal the folly to which it led Christ:

> Was that Love wise, O Saviour mine,
> Which drew Thee down to earth below?
> . . . . . .
> This Love which makes me foolish, lo!
> It took away Thy Wisdom quite;
> This love which makes me languish so,
> It robbed Thee of Thy very might.

And the poem ends in transports which are veritable foolishness to men.

DON QUIXOTE

WAS there ever so strange a book as this *Don Quixote !* To what class shall we assign it ? Solitary, singular, it will not be pigeon-holed ; your literary entomologists shall ticket it, *genus* and *sub-genus* it, at their peril. It is complex beyond measure. It is a piece of literary duplicity without precedent or succession ; nay, duplicity within duplicity, a sword turning all ways, like that which guarded 'unpermitted Eden,' to quote a cancelled verse of Rossetti's *Love's Nocturn.*

Let not Swift say that he was born to introduce and refine irony. The irony of Cervantes is refined and dangerous beyond the irony of Swift ; Swift's is obvious beside it. All irony is double-tongued ; but whether it be the irony of Swift, or Swift's predecessors, or Swift's successors, it has this characteristic : that its duplicity is (so to speak) a one-sided duplicity ; if you do not take the inner meaning, you read baffled, without pleasure, without admiration, without comprehension. But this strange irony, this grave irony, this broadly-laughing irony, of the strange, grave, humorous Spaniard, delights even those who have not a touch of the ironic in their composition. They laugh at the comic mask, who cannot see the melancholy face behind it. It is the Knight of the Rueful Countenance in the vizard of Sancho Panza ; and all laugh, while some few have tears in

their laughter. And they know not that their derision is derided; that they are trapped and cozened into jeers; that Cervantes, from behind his mask, beholds their grins with a sardonic smile.

A core of scornful and melancholy protest, set about with a pulp of satire and outside all a rind of thick burlesque—that is *Don Quixote*. It never 'laughed Spain's chivalry away.' Chivalry was no more, in a country where it could be written. Where it could be thought an impeachment of idealism, idealism had ceased to be. Against this very state of things its secret but lofty contempt is aimed. Herein lies its curious complexity. Outwardly Cervantes falls in with the waxing materialism of the day, and professes to satirize everything that is chivalrous and ideal. Behind all that, is subtle, suppressed, mordant satire of the material spirit in all its forms: the clownish materialism of the boor; the comfortable materialism of the *bourgeois;* the pedantic materialism of the scholar and the mundane cleric; the idle, luxurious, arrogant materialism of the noble—all agreeing in derisive conceit of superiority to the poor madman who still believes in grave, exalted, heroic ideas of life and duty. Finally, at the deepmost core of the strange and wonderful satire, in which the hidden mockery, is so opposite to the seeming mockery, lies a sympathy even to tears with all height and heroism insulated and out of date,

mad to the eyes of a purblind world : nay, a bitter confession that such nobility is, indeed, mad and phantasmal, in so much as it imputes its own greatness to a petty and clay-content society. Even Sancho is held up to admiration mixed with smiles, because he has the dim yet tough insight to follow what he does not understand, yet obscurely feels to be worthy of love and following. The author of the heroic *Numantia* a contemner of the lofty and ideal ! It could not be. Surely Don Quixote has much of the writer's self ; of his poetic discontent with the earthy and money-seeking society around him. There is no true laughter in literature with such a hidden sadness as that of Cervantes.

Yet it is laughter, and not all sad. The man is a humorist, and feels that if the world be full of mournful humour, yet life would go nigh to madness if there were not some honest laughter as well—laughter from the full lungs. Therefore he gives us Sancho—rich, unctuous, Shakespearean humour to the marrow of him. The mockers of the Don, with their practical jests on him, furnish the understanding reader with but pitying and half-reluctant laughter ; but the faithful compost of fat and flesh who cleaves to the meagre visionary allows us mirth unstinted and unqualified. Many a touch in this creation of the great Spaniard reminds us of like touches in the greatest of Englishmen. Sancho's blunt rejection of titles, for

example : ' Don does not belong to me, nor ever did to any of my family : I am called plain Sancho Panza, my father was a Sancho, and my grandfather a Sancho, and they were all Panzas, without any addition of Dons or Donnas.' Who does not remember at once the drunken tinker's ' What ! am I not Christopher Sly ? ' etc. The two passages are delightfully kindred in style and humour. How like, too, are Sancho's meandering telling of his story at the Duke's table, and Dame Quickly's narrative style, when she recounts Falstaff's promise of marriage ! Unadulterated peasant nature both—the same in Spain as in East-cheap. What more gloriously characteristic than Sancho's rebutting of the charge that he may prove ungrateful in advancement to high station ? ' Souls like mine are covered four inches thick with the grease of the old Christian.'

But enough. With all the inward gravity of his irony, Cervantes has abundantly provided that we need not take his seriousness too seriously : there is laughter even for those who enter deepest into that grave core.

THE WAY OF IMPERFECTION

OVID, with the possible exception of Catullus, is the most modern-minded of Latin poets. It is therefore with delight that we first encounter his dictum, so essentially modern, so opposed to the æsthetic feeling of the ancient world, *decentiorem esse faciem in quâ aliquis nævus esset.* It was a dictum borne out by his own practice, a practice at heart essentially romantic rather than classic; and there can therefore be little wonder that the saying was scouted by his contemporaries as an eccentricity of genius. The dominant cult of classicism was the worship of perfection, and the Goth was its iconoclast. Then at length literature reposed in the beneficent and quickening shadow of imperfection, which gave us for consummate product Shakespeare, in whom greatness and imperfection reached their height. Since him, however, there has been a gradual decline from imperfection. Milton, at his most typical, was far too perfect; Pope was ruined by his quest for the quality; and if Dryden partially escaped, it was because of the rich faultiness with which Nature had endowed him. The stand made by the poets of the early part of the nineteenth century was only temporarily successful; and now [1889], we suppose, no thoughtful person can contemplate without alarm the hold which the renascent principle has gained over the contemporary mind. Unless some voice be raised

in timely protest, we feel that English art (in its widest sense) must soon dwindle to the extinction of unendurable excellence.

Over the whole contemporary mind is the trail of this serpent perfection. It even affects the realm of colour, where it begets cloying, enervating harmonies, destitute of those stimulating contrasts by which the great colourists threw into relief the general agreement of their hues. It leads in poetry to the love of miniature finish, and *that* in turn (because minute finish is most completely attainable in short poems) leads to the tyranny of sonnet, ballade, rondeau, triolet, and their kind. The principle leads again to æstheticism ; which is simply the aspiration for a hot-house seclusion of beauty in a world which Nature has tempered by bracing gusts of ugliness.

The most nobly conceived character in assuming *vraisemblance* takes up a certain quantity of imperfection ; it is its water of crystallization : expel this, and far from securing, as the artist fondly deems, a more perfect crystal, the character falls to powder. We by no means desire those improbable incongruities which, frequent enough in actual life, should in art be confined to comedy. But even incongruities may find their place in serious art, if they be artistic incongruities, not too glaring or suggestive of unlikelihood ; incongruities which are felt by the reader to have a whimsical hidden keeping with the congruities of the

character, which enhance the consent of the general qualities by an artistically modulated dissent; which just lend, and no more than lend, the ratifying seal of Nature to the dominating regularities of characterization.

From the neglect of all this have come the hero and heroine; and among all prevalent types of heroine, *the* worst is one apparently founded on Pope's famous dictum,

> Most women have no characters at all—

a dictum which we should denounce with scorn, if so acute an observer as De Quincey did not stagger us by defending it. He defends it to attack Pope. Pope (says De Quincey) did not see that what he advances as a reproach against women constitutes the very beauty of them. It is the absence of any definite character which enables their character to be moulded by others: and it is this soft plasticity which renders them such charming companions as wives. We should be inclined to say that the feminine characteristic which De Quincey considered plasticity was rather elasticity. Now the most elastic substance in Nature is probably ivory. What are the odds, you subtle, paradoxical, delightful ghost of delicate thought, what *are* the odds on your moulding a billiard ball?

Does anyone believe in Patient Grizzel? Still more, does anyone believe in the Nut-brown Maid? Yet their descendants infest literature, from Spenser to Dickens and Tennyson, from

Una to Enid ; made tolerable in the poem only by their ideal surroundings. The dream of ' a perfect woman nobly planned ' underlies the thing ; albeit Wordsworth goes on to show that his ' perfect woman ' had her little failings. Shakespeare was not afraid to touch with such failings his finest heroines ; he knew that these defects serve only to enhance the large nobilities of character, as the tender imperfections and wayward wilfulnesses of individual rose-petals enhance the prevalent symmetry of the rose. His most consummate woman, Imogen, possesses her little naturalizing traits. Take the situation where she is confronted with her husband's order for her murder. What the Patient Grizzel heroine would have done we all know. She would have behaved with unimpeachable resignation, and prepared for death with a pathos ordered according to the best canons of art. What does this glorious Imogen do ? Why (and we publicly thank Heaven for it), after the first paroxysm of weeping, which makes the blank verse sob, she bursts into a fit of thoroughly feminine and altogether charming jealousy. A perfect woman indeed, for she is imperfect ! Imogen, however, it may be urged, is not a Patient Grizzel. Take, then, Desdemona, who is. That is to say, Desdemona represents the type in nature which Patient Grizzel misrepresents. Mark now the difference in treatment. Shakespeare knew that these gentle, affectionate, yielding, all-submissive and all-suffering dis-

positions are founded on weakness, and accordingly he gave Desdemona the defects of her qualities. He would have no perfection in *his* characters. Rather than face the anger of the man whom she so passionately loves, Desdemona will lie—a slight lie, but one to which the ideal distortion of her would never be allowed to yield. Yet the weakness but makes Shakespeare's lady more credible, more piteous, perhaps even more lovable.

From the later developments of contemporary fiction the faultless hero and heroine have, we admit, relievingly disappeared. So much good has been wrought by the craze for 'human documents.' But alas! the disease expelled, who will expel the medicine? And the hydra perfection merely shoots up a new head. It is now a desire for the perfect reproduction of Nature, uninterfered with by the writer's ideals or sympathies; so that we have novelists who stand coldly aloof from their characters, and exhibit them with passionless countenance. We all admire the representations which result: 'How beautifully drawn! how exactly like Nature!' Yes, beautifully drawn; but they do not live. They resemble the mask in *Phaedrus* —a cunning semblance, *at animam non habet.* This attitude of the novelist is fatal to artistic illusion: his personages do not move us because they do not move him. Partridge believed in the ghost because 'the little man on the stage was more frightened than I'; and n novel-

reading we are all Partridges, we only believe in the novelist's creations when he shows us that he believes in them himself. Finally, this pestilence attacks in literature the form no less than the essence, the integuments even more than the vitals. Hence arises the dominant belief that mannerism is vicious; and accordingly critics have erected the ideal of a style stripped of everything special or peculiar, a style which should be to thought what light is to the sun. Now this pure white light of style is as impossib e as undesirable; it *must* be splintered into colour by the refracting media o the individual mind, and humanity will always prefer the colour. Theoretically we ought to have no mannerisms; practically we cannot help having them, and without them style would be flavourless—' faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null.' Men will not drink distilled water; it is entirely pure and entirely insipid. The object of writing is to communicate individuality, the object of style adequately to embody that individuality; and since in every individuality worth anything there are characteristic peculiarities, these must needs be reproduced in the embodiment. So reproduced we call them mannerisms. They correspond to those little unconscious tricks of voice, manner, gesture, in a friend which are to us the friend himself, and which we would not forgo. It is affected to imitate another's tricks of demeanour: similarly, it is affected to imitate another's mannerisms.

We should avoid as far as possible in conversation passing conventionalities of speech, because they are brainless ; similarly, we should avoid as far as possible in writing the mannerisms of our age, because they corrupt originality. But in essence, mannerisms—individual mannerisms, are a season of style, and happily unavoidable. It is, for instance, stated in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* that De Quincey is not a mannerистic writer ; and, so put, the assertion has much truth. Yet he is full of mannerisms, mannerisms which every student lovingly knows,and without which the essayist would not be our very own De Quincey.

We say, therefore : Guard against this seductive principle of perfection. Order yourselves to a wise conformity with that Nature who cannot for the life of her create a brain without making one half of it weaker than the other half, or even a fool without a flaw in his folly ; who cannot set a nose straight on a man's face, and whose geometrical drawing would be tittered at by half the pupils of South Kensington. Consider who is the standing modern oracle of perfection, and what resulted from *his* interpretation of it. ' Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle.' No ; it is half a pound of muscle to the square inch—and *that* is no trifle. One satisfactory reflection we have in concluding. Wherever else the reader may be grieved by perfection, this article, at least, is sacred from the accursed thing.

Now, how much of all this do we mean? Hearken, O reader, to an apologue.

Once on a time there was a hypochondriac, who—though his digestion was excellent—believed that his delicate system required a most winnowed choice of viands. His physician, in order to humour him, prescribed a light and carefully varied diet. But the hypochondriac was not satisfied.

'I want to know, Doctor,' he said, 'how much of this food really contributes to the building up of my system, and how much is waste material!'

'That,' observed the sage physician, 'I cannot possibly tell you without recondite analysis and nice calculation.'

'Then,' said the hypochondriac, in a rage, I will not eat your food. You are an impostor Sir, and a charlatan, and I believe now your friends who told me that you were a homœopath in disguise.'

'My dear Sir' replied the unmoved physician, 'if you will eat nothing but what is entire nutriment, you will soon need to consult, not a doctor, but a chameleon. To what purpose are your digestive organs, unless to secrete what is nutritious, and excrete what is innutritious!'

And the moral is—no, the reader shall have a pleasure denied to him in his outraged childhood. He that hath understanding, let him understand.

A RENEGADE POET ON THE POET

A POET is one who endeavours to make the worst of both worlds. For he is thought seldom to make provision for himself in the next life, and 'tis odds if he gets any in this. The world will have nothing with his writings because they are not of the world ; nor the religious, because they are not of religion. He is suspect of the worldly, because of his unworldliness, and of the religious for the same reason. For there is a way of the world in religion, no less than in irreligion. Nay, though he should frankly cast in his lot with the profane, he is in no better case with them ; for he alone of men, though he travel to the Pit, picks up no company by the way ; but has a contrivance to evade Scripture, and find out a narrow road to damnation. Indeed, if the majority of men go to the nether abodes, 'tis the most hopeful argument I know of his salvation ; for 'tis inconceivable he should ever do as other men.

Mr Robert Louis Stevenson does not stick to affirm that the *littérateur* in general is but a poor devil of a fellow, who lives to please, and earns his bread by doing what he likes. Let this mere son of joy, says Mr Stevenson, sleek down his fine airs before men who are of some use in the world. Yet if religion be useful, so is poetry.

For poetry is the teacher of beauty ; and without beauty men would soon lose the conception of a God, and exchange God for the devil : as indeed happens at this day among many savages where the worships of ugliness and of the devil flourish together. Whence it was, doubtless, that poetry and religion were of old so united, as is seen in the prophetic books of the Bible. Where men are not kept in mind of beauty they become lower than the beasts ; for a dog, I will maintain, is a very tolerable judge of beauty, as appears from the fact that any liberally educated dog does, in a general way, prefer a woman to a man. The instinct of men is against this *renegado* of a Robert Louis. Though Butler justly observes that all men love and admire clothes, but scorn and despise him that made them, 'tis of tailors that he speaks. A *modiste* is held in as fair a reverence as any tradesman ; and 'tis evident that the ground of the difference is because a *modiste* has some connexion with art and beauty, but a tailor only with ugliness and utility. There is no utilitarian but will class a soapmaker as a worthy and useful member of the community ; yet is there no necessity why a man should use soap. Nay, if necessity be any criterion of usefulness (and surely that is useful which is necessary), the universal practice of mankind will prove poetry to be more useful than soap ; since there is no recorded age in which men did not use poetry, but for some odd thousand years the world got

on very tolerably well without soap. Look closely into the matter, and there are no people really useful to a man, in the strict utilitarian sense, but butchers and bakers, for they feed man ; builders, for they house a man ; women, for they help him into the world ; and doctors and soldiers, for they help him out of it.

Then, too, this rogue of an R. L. S., I doubt me (plague on him ! I cannot get him out of my head), has found writing pretty utilitarian—to himself ; and utility begins at home, I take it. Does he not eat and drink romances, and has he not dug up Heaven knows what riches (the adventurer !) in *Treasure Island?* And as for usefulness to other men, since we must have that or be ignoble, it seems—is there no utility in pleasure, pray you, when it makes a man's heart the better for it ; as do, I am very certain, sun, and flowers, and Stevensons ?

Did we give in to that sad dog of a Robert Louis, we must needs set down the poor useless poet as a son of joy. But the title were an irony more mordant than the title of the hapless ones to whom it likens him. *Filles de joie?* O rather *filles d'amertume !* And if the pleasure they so mournfully purvey were lofty and purging as it is abysmal and corrupting then would Stevenson's parallel be just ; but *then*, too, from ignoble victims they would become noble ministrants. 'Tis a difference which vitiates the whole comparison, O careless player with the toys of the gods! whom we have taken, I warrant

me, more gravely than you take your whimsical self in this odd pleasantry !

Like his sad sisters, but with *that* transfiguring distinction, the poet sows in sorrow that men may reap in joy. He serves his pleasure, say you, R. L. S.? 'Tis a strange pleasure, if so it be. He loves his art ? No, his art loves *him ;* cleaves to him when she has become unwelcome, a very weariness of the flesh. He is the sorry sport of a mischievous convention. The traditions of his craft, fortified by the unreasonable and misguiding lessons of those sages who have ever instructed the poet in the things that make for his better misery, persuade him that he can be no true singer except he slight the world. Wordsworth has taught him a most unnecessary apprehension lest the world should be too much with him; which, to be sure, was very singular in Wordsworth, who never had the world with him till he was come near to going out of it. The poor fool, therefore, devotes assiduous practice to acquiring an art which comes least natural to him of all men ; and, after employing a world of pains to scorn the world, is strangely huffed that it should return the compliment in kind. There is left him no better remedy but, having spent his youth in alienating its opinion, to spend his manhood in learning to despise its opinion. And though it be a hard matter to contemn the world, 'tis a yet harder matter to contemn its contempt. I regard the villainous misleaders of poets who have preached up these doctrines as

all one for selfish cruelty with those who maintained the tradition of operatic eunuchs; and would have them equally suppressed by Christian sentiment. For they have procured the severance of the one from his kind to gratify their understanding, as of the other to gratify their ear.

MOESTITIAE ENCOMIUM

MARSH, and night. There are sounds; no man shall say what sounds. There are shadows; no man shall say what shadows. There is light; were there not shadow, no man should call it light. The landscape is a sketch blotted in with smoke of Erebus, and greys from the cheek of death: those trees which threaten from the horizon—they are ranked apparitions, no boon of gracious God. The heaven is a blear copy of the land. Athwart the saturnine marsh, runs long, pitilessly straight, ghastly with an inward pallor (for no gleam dwells on it from the sky), the leprous, pined, infernal watercourse; a water for the Plutonian naiads—exhaling cold perturbation. It is a stream, a land, a heaven, pernicious to the heart of man; created only for

> The abhorred estate
> Of empty shades, and disembodied elves.

Over this comes up of a sudden an unlawful moon. My very heart blanches. But a voice which is not the voice of reed, or sedge, or flag, or wind, yet is as the voice of each, says: 'Fear not; it is I, whom you know.' I know her, this power that has parted from the side of Terror; she is Sadness, and we are companions of old. Yet not here am I most familiar with her presence; far oftener have I found her lurking in the blocked-out, weighty shadows which fall

from the tyrannous sun. We love the tyrannous sun, she and I.

I know her, for I am of the age, and the age is hers. Alas for the nineteenth century, with so much pleasure, and so little joy; so much learning, and so little wisdom; so much effort, and so little fruition; so many philosophers, and such little philosophy; so many seers, and such little vision; so many prophets, and such little foresight; so many teachers, and such an infinite wild vortex of doubt! the one divine thing left to us is Sadness. Even our virtues take her stamp; the intimacy of our loves is born of despair; our very gentleness to our children is because we know how short their time. 'Eat, we say, 'eat, drink, and be merry; for to-morrow ye are men.'

I know her; and praise, knowing. Foolishly we shun this shunless Sadness; fondly we deem of her as but huntress of men, who is tender and the bringer of tenderness to those she visits with her fearful favours. A world without joy were more tolerable than a world without sorrow. Without sadness where were brotherliness? For in joy is no brotherliness, but only a boon-companionship. She is the Spartan sauce which gives gusto to the remainder-viands of life, the broken meats of love. 'The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.' Her servitors rise in the hierarchy of being: to woman, in particular, hardly comes the gracious gift of sweetness till her soul has been excavated by pain. Even

a dog in sadness is nearer to the level and the heart of man. She has her dark *accolade*, her sombre patents of nobility; but the titles of that abhorred peerage are clemently and benignly unsuccessive. Our sweetest songs are from her, Shelley knew; but he needed not to have limited the benefaction by song. She is not fair, poor Grief yet in her gift is highest fairness. Love, says Plato, is unbeautiful: yet Love makes all things beautiful. And all things take on beauty which pass into the hueless flame of *her* aureole. It may chance to one, faring through a wet grey day-fall, that suddenly from behind him spurts the light of the sinking sun. Instantly, the far windows of unseen homesteads break into flash through the rain-smoke the meads run over with yellow light, the scattered trees are splashed with saffron He turns about towards the fountain of the splendorous surprise —sees but a weeping sundown of pallid and sickly gold. So, throughout humanity, my eyes discern a mourning loveliness; so I turn expectant—' What, pale Sorrow ? Could all this have been indeed from you ? And give you so much beauty that no dower of it remains for your own ? ' Nay, but my vision was unversed when I disvalued her comeliness, and I looked not with the looking of her lovers.

Nay, but to our weak mortality the extremity of immitigate beauty is inapprehensible save through reflection and dilution. Sorrow is fair with an unmortal fairness, which we see not till

it is humanized in the sorrowful. The sweetest smiles I know, her rod draws forth from the rock of an abiding melancholy ; the faces which haunt me from canvas attest that *she* prescribed to the painter's hand ; of the most beautiful among the sons of men it is recorded that, though many had seen Him weep, no man had seen Him smile. Nor with beauty end her gifts to men Solomon, who found in knowledge but increase of sorrow, might have found in sorrow increase of knowledge : it is less wisdom that reveals mourning, than mourning that reveals wisdom—as the Hindoo gathers secret things from gazing in the pool of ink. Power is the reward of sadness. It was after the Christ had wept over Jerusalem that He uttered some of His most august words ; it was when His soul had been sorrowful even unto death that His enemies fell prostrate before His voice. Who suffers, conquers. The bruised is the breaker. By torture the Indians try their braves ; by torture Life, too, tries the elected victors of her untriumphal triumphs, and of cypress is the commemoration on their brows. Sadness the king-maker, *morituri te salutant !*

Come, therefore, O Sadness, fair and froward and tender ; dolorous coquette of the Abyss, who claspest them that shun thee, with fierce kisses that hiss against their tears ; wraith of the mists of sighs ; mermaid of the flood Cocytus, of the waves which are salt with the weeping of the generations ; most menacing seductress,

whose harp is stringed with lamentations, whose voice is fatal with disastrous prescience; draw me down, merge me, under thy waters of wail! Of thy undesired loveliness am I desirous, for I have looked long on thy countenance, and can forget it not, nor the footfalls of thy majesty which still shake the precincts of my heart: under the fringed awnings of the sunsets thou art throned, and *thy* face parts the enfolding pavilions of the Evens; thou art very dear to the heart of Night; thou art mistress of the things unmetable which are dreadful to meted life, mistress of the barren hearth and the barren soul of man, mistress of the weepings of death and of birth; the cry of the bride is thine and the pang of the first k ss, the pain which is mortise to delight, the flowers which trail between the ruined chaps of mortality, the over-foliaging death which chequers all human suns. Of thy beauty undesired am I desirous, for knowledge is with thee, and dominion, and piercing, and healing; thou woundest with a thorn of light; thou sittest portress by the gates of hearts; and a sceptred quiet rests regal in thine eyes' sepulchral solitudes, in the tenebrous desolations of thine eyes.

'The over-foliaging death which chequers all human suns.' Even so. Not by Cocytus is delimited her delimitless realm. For I have a vision; and the manner of the vision is this. I see the Angel of life. It (for it may be of either sex) is a mighty grey-winged Angel, with bowed

and hidden face, looking into the river of life. And sometimes a waver of sunshine rests upon its grey wings and folded veil, so that I seem to see its face, and to see it exceeding beautiful; and then again the sunlight fades, and I dare not attempt to penetrate that veil, for I imagine the countenance exceeding awful. And I see that within its sad drapery the Angel weeps, and its tears fall into the water of life: but whether they be tears of joy or sorrow, only its Creator knows, not I. I have tasted the water of life where the tears of the Angel fell; and the taste was bitter as brine.

Then, say you, they were tears of sorrow? The tears of joy are salt, as well as the tears of sorrow. And in that sentence are many meanings.

FINIS CORONAT OPUS

IN a city of the future, among a people bearing a name I know not, lived Florentian the poet, whose place was high in the retinue of Fortune. Young, noble, popular, influential, he had succeeded to a rich inheritance, and possessed the natural gifts which gain the love of women. But the seductions which Florentian followed were darker and more baleful than the seductions of women ; for they were the seductions of knowledge and intellectual pride. In very early years he had passed from the pursuit of natural to the pursuit of unlawful science ; he had conquered power where conquest is disaster, and power servitude.

But the ambition thus gratified had elsewhere suffered check. It was the custom of this people that among their poets he who by universal acclaim outsoared all competitors should be crowned with laurel in public ceremony. Now between Florentian and this distinction there stood a rival. Seraphin was a spirit of higher reach than Florentian, and the time was nearing fast when even the slow eyes of the people must be opened to a supremacy which Florentian himself acknowledged in his own heart. Hence arose in his lawless soul an insane passion ; so that all which he had seemed to him as nothing beside that which he had not, and the compassing of this barred achievement became to him the one worthy object of existence. Repeated

essay only proved to him the inadequacy of his native genius, and he turned for aid to the power which he served. Nor was the power of evil slow to respond. It promised him assistance that should procure him his heart's desire, but demanded in return a crime before which even the unscrupulous selfishness of Florentian paled. For he had sought and won the hand of Aster, daughter to the Lady Urania, and the sacrifice demanded from him was no other than the sacrifice of his betrothed, the playmate of his childhood. The horror of such a suggestion prevailed for a time over his unslacked ambition. But he, who believed himself a strong worker of ill, was in reality a weak follower of it; he believed himself a Vathek, he was but a Faust : continuous pressure and gradual familiarization could warp him to any sin. Moreover his love for Aster had been gradually and unconsciously sapped by the habitual practice of evil. So God smote Florentian, that his antidote became to him his poison, and love the regenerator love the destroyer. A strong man, he might have been saved by love : a weak man, he was damned by it.

The palace of Florentian was isolated in the environs of the city ; and on the night before his marriage he stood in the room known to his domestics as the Chamber of Statues. Both its appearance, and the sounds which (his servants averred) sometimes issued from it, contributed to secure for him the seclusion that he desired

whenever he sought this room. It was a chamber in many ways strongly characteristic of its owner, a chamber ' like his desires lift upwards and exalt,' but neither wide nor far-penetrating ; while its furnishing revealed his fantastic and somewhat childish fancy. At the extremity which faced the door there stood, beneath a crucifix, a small marble altar, on which burned a fire of that strange greenish tinge communicated by certain salts. Except at this extremity, the walls were draped with deep violet curtains bordered by tawny gold, only half displayed by the partial illumination of the place. The light was furnished from lamps of coloured glass, sparsely hung along the length of the room, but numerously clustered about the altar : lamps of diverse tints, amber, peacock-blue, and changefully mingled harmonies of green like the scales on a beetle's back. Above them were coiled thinnest serpentinings of suspended crystal, hued like the tongues in a wintry hearth, flame-colour, violet, and green; so that, as in the heated current from the lamps the snakes twirled and flickered, and their bright shadows twirled upon the wall, they seemed at length to undulate their twines and the whole altar became surrounded with a fiery fantasy of sinuous stains.

On the right hand side of the chamber there rose—appearing almost animated in the half lustre—three statues of colossal height, painted to resemble life ; for in this matter Florentian followed the taste of the ancient Greeks. They

were statues of three poets, and, not insignificantly, of three pagan poets. The first two, Homer and Æschylus, presented no singularity beyond their Titanic proportions; but it was altogether otherwise with the third statue, which was unusual in conception. It was the figure of Virgil; not the Virgil whom *we* know, but the Virgil of mediæval legend, Virgil magician and poet. It bent forwards and downwards towards the spectator; its head was uncircled by any laurel, but on the flowing locks was an impression as of where the wreath had rested; its lowered left hand proffered the magician's rod, its outstretched right poised between light finger-tips the wreath of gilded metal whose impress seemed to linger on its hair: the action was as though it were about to place the laurel on the head of some one beneath. This was the carved embodiment of Florentian's fanatical ambition, a perpetual memento of the double end at which his life was aimed. On the necromancer's rod he could lay his hand, but the laurel of poetic supremacy hung yet beyond his reach. The opposite side of the chamber had but one object to arrest attention: a curious head upon a pedestal, a head of copper with a silver beard, the features not unlike those of a Pan, and the tongue protruded as in derision. This, with a large antique clock completed the noticeable garniture of the room.

Up and down this apartment Florentian

paced for long, his countenance expressive of inward struggle, till his gaze fell upon the figure o Virgil. His face grew hard ; with an air of sudden decision he began to act. Taking from its place the crucifix he threw it on the ground ; taking from its pedestal the head he set it on the altar ; and it seemed to Florentian as if he reared therewith a demon on the altar of his heart, round which also coiled burning serpents. He sprinkled, in the flame which burned before the head, some drops from a vial ; he wounded his arm, and moistened from the wound the idol's tongue, and, stepping back, he set his foot upon the prostrate cross.

A darkness rose like a fountain from the altar, and curled downward through the room as wine through water, until every light was obliterated. Then from out the darkness grew gradually the visage of the idol, soaked with fire ; its face was as the planet Mars, its beard as white-hot wire that seethed and crept with heat ; and there issued from the lips a voice that threw Florentian on the ground : 'Whom seekest thou ?' Twice was the question repeated ; and then, as if the display of power were sufficient, the gloom gathered up its edges like a mantle and swept inwards towards the altar ; where it settled in a cloud so dense as to eclipse even the visage of fire. A voice came forth again ; but a voice that sounded not the same ; a voice that seemed to have withered in crossing the confines of existence,

and to traverse illimitable remotenesses beyond the imagining of man; a voice melancholy with a boundless calm, the calm not of a crystalline peace but of a marmoreal despair, 'Knowest thou me; what I am?'

Vanity of man! He who had fallen prostrate before this power now rose to his feet with the haughty answer, 'My deity and my slave!'

The unmoved voice held on its way:

'Scarce high enough for thy deity; too high for thy slave, I am pain exceeding great; and the desolation that is at the heart of things, in the barren heath and the barren soul. I am terror without beauty, and force without strength, and sin without delight. I beat my wings against the cope of Eternity, as thou thine against the window of Time. Thou knowest me not, but I know thee, Florentian, what thou art and what thou wouldst. Thou wouldst have and wouldst not give, thou wouldst not render, yet wouldst receive. This cannot be with me. Thou art but half baptized with my baptism, yet wouldst have thy supreme desire. In thine own blood thou wast baptized, and I gave my power to serve thee; thou wouldst have my spirit to inspire thee—thou must be baptized in blood not thine own!'

'Any way but one way!' said Florentian, shuddering.

'One way: no other way. Knowest thou not that in wedding thee to her thou givest me a rival? Thinkest thou my spirit can dwell

beside her spirit ? Thou must renounce her or me : aye, thou wilt lose not only all thou dreadest to sin for, but all thou hast already sinned for. Render me her body for my temple, and I render thee my spirit to inhabit it. This supreme price thou must pay for thy supreme wish. I ask not her soul. Give that to the God Whom she serves, give her body to me whom thou servest. Why hesitate ? It is too late to hesitate, for the time is at hand to act. Choose, before this cloud dissolve which is now dissolving. But remember : thine ambition thou mightest have had ; love thou art too deep damned to have.'

The cloud turned from black to grey. ' I consent ! ' cried Florentian, impetuously.

* * * * *

Three years—what years ! since I planted in the grave the laurel which will soon now reach its height ; and the fatal memory is heavy upon me, the shadow of my laurel is as the shadow of funeral yew. If confession indeed give ease, I, who am deprived of all other confession, may yet find some appeasement in confessing to this paper. I am not penitent ; yet I will do fiercest penance. With the scourge of inexorable recollection I will tear open my scars. With the cuts of a pitiless analysis I make the post-mortem examen of my crime.

Even now can I feel the passions of that moment when (since the forefated hour was

not till midnight), leaving her under the influence of the merciful potion which should save *her* from the agony of knowledge and *me* from the agony of knowing that she knew, I sought, in the air of night and in hurrying swiftness, the resolution of which she had deprived me. The glow-worm lamps went out as I sped by, the stars in rainy pools leaped up and went out, too, as if both worm and star were quenched by the shadow of my passing, until I stopped exhausted on the bridge, and looked down into the river. How dark it ran, how deep, how pauseless; how unruffled by a memory of its ancestral hills! Wisely unruffled, perchance. When it first danced down from its native source, did it not predestine all the issues of its current, every darkness through which it should flow, every bough which it should break, every leaf which it should whirl down in its way? Could it, if it would, revoke its waters, and run upward to the holy hills? No; the first step includes all sequent steps; when I did my first evil, I did also this evil; years ago had this shaft been launched, though it was but now curving to its mark; years ago had I smitten her, though she was but now staggering to her fall. Yet I hesitated to act who had already acted, I ruffled my current which I could not draw in. When at length, after long wandering, I retraced my steps, I had not resolved, I had recognized that I could resolve no longer.

She only cried three times. Three times, O my God !—no, not *my* God.

It was close on midnight, and I felt her only, (she was not visible,) as she lay at the feet of Virgil, magician and poet. The lamp had fallen from my hand, and I dared not relume it. I even placed myself between her and the light of the altar, though the salt-green fire was but the spectre of a flame. I reared my arm ; I shook ; I faltered. At that moment, with a deadly voice, the accomplice-hour gave forth its sinister command.

I swear I struck not the first blow. Some violence seized my hand, and drove the poniard down. Whereat she cried ; and I, frenzied, dreading detection, dreading, above all, her wakening,—I struck again, and again she cried ; and yet again, and yet again she cried. Then—her eyes opened. I *saw* them open, through the gloom I saw them ; through the gloom they were revealed to me, that I might see them to my hour of death. An awful recognition, an unspeakable consciousness grew slowly into them. Motionless with horror they were fixed on mine, motionless with horror mine were fixed on them, as she wakened into death.

How long had I seen them ? I saw them still. There was a buzzing in my brain as if a bell had ceased to toll. How long had it ceased to toll ? I know not. Has any bell been tolling ? I know not. All my senses are resolved into one sense, and that is frozen to those eyes. Silence

now, at least; abysmal silence; except the sound (or is the sound in me ?), the sound of dripping blood; except that the flame upon the altar sputters, and hisses, and bickers, as if it licked its jaws. Yes, there is another sound—hush, hark !—It is the throbbing of my heart. Not—no, nevermore the throbbing of *her* heart! The loud pulse dies slowly away, as I hope my life is dying; and again I hear the licking of the flame.

A mirror hung opposite to me, and for a second, in some mysterious manner, without ever ceasing to behold the eyes, I beheld also the mirrored flame. The hideous, green, writhing tongue was streaked and flaked with *red!* I swooned, if swoon it can be called; swooned to the mirror, swooned to all about me, swooned to myself, but swooned not to those eyes.

Strange, that no one has taken me, me for such long hours shackled in a gaze! It is night again, is it not ? Nay, I remember, I have swooned; what now stirs me from my stupor ? Light; the guilty gloom is shuddering at the first sick rays of day. Light ? not that, not that; anything but that. Ah! the horrible traitorous light, that will denounce me to myself, that will unshroud to me my dead, that will show me all the monstrous fact. I swooned indeed.

When I recovered consciousness, It was risen from the ground, and kissed me with the kisses of Its mouth.

They told me during the day that the great bell of the cathedral, though no man rang it, had sounded thrice at midnight. It was not a fancy, therefore, that I heard a bell toll *there*, where—when she cried three times. And they asked me jestingly if marriage was ageing me already. I took a mirror to find what they meant. On my forehead were graven three deep wrinkles ; and in the locks which fell over my right shoulder I beheld, long and prominent, three white hairs. I carry those marks to this hour They and a dark stain on the floor at the feet of Virgil are the sole witnesses to that night.

It is three years, I have said, since then ; and how have I prospered ! Has Tartarus fulfilled its terms of contract, as I faithfully and frightfully fulfilled mine ? Yes. In the course which I have driven through every obstacle and every scruple, I have followed at least no phantom-lure. I have risen to the heights of my aspiration, I have overtopped my sole rival. True, it is a tinsel renown ; true, Seraphin is still the light-bearer, I but a dragon vomiting infernal fire and smoke which sets the crowd a-gaping. But it is your nature to gape, my good friend of the crowd, and I would have you gape at me. If you prefer to Jove Jove's imitator, what use to be Jove ? 'Gods,' you cry ; 'what a clatter of swift-footed steeds, and clangour of rapid rolling brazen wheels, and vibrating glare of lamps ! Surely, the

thunder-maned horses of heaven, the chariot of Olympus; and you must be the mighty Thunderer himself, with the flashing of his awful bolts!' Not so, my short-sighted friend: very laughably otherwise. It is but vain old Salmoneus, gone mad in Elis. I know you, and I know myself. I have what I would have. I work for the present: let Seraphin have the moonshine future, if he lust after it. Present renown means present power; it suffices me that I am supreme in the eyes of my fellow-men. A year since was the laurel decreed to me, and a day ordained for the ceremony: it was only postponed to the present year because of what they thought my calamity. They accounted it calamity, and knew not that it was deliverance. For, my ambition achieved, the compact by which I had achieved it ended, and the demon who had inspired forsook me. Discovery was impossible. A death sudden but natural: how could men know that it was death of the Two-years-dead? I drew breath at length in freedom. For two years It had spoken to me with her lips, used her gestures, smiled her smile:—ingenuity of hell!—for two years the breathing Murder wrought before me, and tortured me in a hundred ways with the living desecration of her form.

Now, relief unspeakable! that vindictive sleuth-hound of my sin has at last lagged from the trail; I have had a year of respite, of release

from all torments but those native to my breast ; in four days I shall receive the solemn gift of what I already virtually hold ; and now, surely, I exult in fruition. If the approach of possession brought not also the approach of recollection, if— Rest, O rest, sad ghost ! Is thy grave not deep enough, or the world wide enough, that thou must needs walk the haunted precincts of my heart ? Are not spectres there too many, without thee ?

Later in the same day. A strange thing has happened to me—if I ought not rather to write a strange nothing. After laying down my pen, I rose and went to the window. I felt the need of some distraction, of escaping from myself. The day, a day in the late autumn, a day of keen winds but bright sunshine, tempted me out : so, putting on cap and mantle, I sallied into the country, where winter pitched his tent on fields yet reddened with the rout of summer. I chose a sheltered lane, whose hedge-rows, little visited by the gust, still retained much verdure ; and I walked along, gazing with a sense of physical refreshment at the now rare green. As my eyes so wandered, while the mind for a time let slip its care, they were casually caught by the somewhat peculiar trace which a leaf-eating caterpillar had left on one of the leaves I carelessly outstretched my hand, plucked from the hedge the leaf, and examined it as I strolled. The marking—a large marking

which traversed the greater part of the surface —took the shape of a rude but distinct figure, the figure 3. Such a circumstance, thought I, might by a superstitious man be given a personal application ; and I fell idly to speculating how it might be applied to myself.

Curious !—I stirred uneasily ; I felt my cheek pale, and a chill which was not from the weather creep through me. Three years since *that ;* three strokes—three cries—three tolls of the bell—three lines on my brow—three white hairs in my head ! I laughed : but the laugh rang false. Then I said, ' Childishness,' threw the leaf away, walked on, hesitated, walked back, picked it up, walked on again, looked at it again. Then, finding I could not laugh myself out of the fancy, I began to reason myself out of it. Even were a supernatural warning probable, a warning refers not to the past but to the future. This referred only to the past, it told me only what I knew already. *Could* it refer to the future ? To the bestowal of the laurel ? No ; that was four days hence, and on the same day was the anniversary of what I feared to name, even in thought. Suddenly I stood still, stabbed to the heart by an idea. I was wrong. The enlaurelling had been postponed to a year from the day on which my supposed affliction was discovered. Now this, although it took place on the day of terrible anniversary, was not known till the day ensuing. Consequently, though it wanted four

days to the bestowal of the laurel, it lacked but three days to the date of my crime. The chain of coincidence was complete. I dropped the leaf as if it had death in it, and strove to evade, by rapid motion and thinking of other things, the idea which appalled me. But, as a man walking in a mist circles continually to the point from which he started, so, in whatever direction I turned the footsteps of my mind, they wandered back to that unabandonable thought. I returned trembling to the house.

Of course it is nothing ; a mere coincidence, that is all. Yes ; a mere coincidence, perhaps, if it had been *one* coincidence. But when it is seven coincidences ! Three stabs, three cries, three tolls, three lines, three hairs, three years, three days ; and on the very date when these coincidences meet, the key to them is put into my hands by the casual work of an insect on a casual leaf, casually plucked. This day alone of all days in my life the scattered rays converge ; they are instantly focussed and flashed on my mind by a leaf ! It may be a coincidence, only a coincidence ; but it is a coincidence at which my marrow sets. I will write no further till the day comes. If by that time anything has happened to confirm my dread, I will record what has chanced.

One thing broods over me with the oppression of certainty. If this incident be indeed a warning that but three days stand as barriers between me and nearing justice, then doom

will come upon me at the unforgettable minute when it came on her.

The third day.—It is an hour before midnight, and I sit in my room of statues. I dare not sleep if I could sleep ; and I write, because the rushing thoughts move slower through the turnstile of expression. I have chosen this place to make what may be my last vigil and last notes, partly from obedience to an inexplicable yet comprehensible fascination, partly from a deliberate resolve. I would face the lightning of vengeance on the very spot where I most tempt its stroke, that if it strike not I may cease to fear its striking. Here then I sit to tease with final questioning the Sibyl of my destiny. With *final* questioning ; for never since the first shock have I ceased to question her, nor she to return me riddling answers. She unrolls her volume till my sight and heart ache at it together. I have been struck by innumerable deaths ; I have perished under a fresh doom every day, every hour—in these last hours, every minute. I write in black thought ; and tear, as soon as written, guess after guess at fate till the floor of my brain is littered with them.

That the deed has been discovered—that seems to me most probable, that is the conjecture which oftenest recurs. Appallingly probable ! Yet how improbable, could I only reason it. Aye, but I cannot reason it. What reason will be left me, if I survive this hour ?

What, indeed, have I to do with reason, or has reason to do with this, where all is beyond reason, where the very foundation of my dread is unassailable simply because it is unreasonable ? What crime can be interred so cunningly, but it will toss in its grave, and tumble the sleeked earth above it ? Or some hidden witness may have beheld me, or the prudently-kept imprudence of this writing may have encountered some unsuspected eye. In any case the issue is the same ; the hour which struck down her will also strike down me : I shall perish on the scaffold or at the stake, unaided by my occult powers ; for I serve a master who is the prince of cowards, and can fight only from ambush. Be it by these ways, or by any of the countless intricacies that my restless mind has unravelled, the vengeance will come : its occasion may be an accident of the instant, a wandering mote of chance ; but the vengeance is pre-ordained and inevitable. When the Alpine avalanche is poised for descent, the most trivial cause—a casual shout—will suffice to start the loosened ruin on its way ; and so the mere echoes of the clock that beats out midnight will disintegrate upon me the precipitant wrath.

Repent ? Nay, nay, it could not have been otherwise than it was ; the defile was close behind me, I could but go forward, forward. If I was merciless to her, was I not more merciless to myself ; could I hesitate to sacrifice her life,

who did not hesitate to sacrifice my soul ? I do not repent, I cannot repent ; it is a thing for inconsequent weaklings. To repent your purposes is comprehensible, to repent your deeds most futile. To shake the tree, and then not gather the fruit—a fool's act ! Aye, but if the fruit be not worth the gathering ? If this fame was not worth the sinning for—this fame, with the multitude's clapping hands half-drowned by the growl of winds that comes in gusts through the unbarred gate of hell ? If I am miserable with it, and might have been happy without it ? With her, without ambition —yes, it might have been. Wife and child ! I have more in my heart than I have hitherto written. I have an intermittent pang of loss. Yes, I, murderer, worse than murderer, have still passions that are not deadly, but tender.

I met a child to-day ; a child with great candour of eyes. They who talk of children's instincts are at fault : she knew not that hell was in my soul, she knew only that softness was in my gaze. She had been gathering wild flowers, and offered them to me. To me, to *me !* I was inexpressibly touched and pleased, curiously touched and pleased. I spoke to her gently, and with open confidence she began to talk. Heaven knows it was little enough she talked of ! Commonest common things, pettiest childish things, fondest foolish things. Of her school, her toys, the strawberries in her garden, her little brothers and sisters—nothing, surely,

to interest any man. Yet I listened enchanted. How simple it all was ; how strange, how wonderful, how sweet ! And she knew not that my eyes were anhungered of her, she knew not that my ears were gluttonous of her speech, she could not have understood it had I told her ; none could, none. For all this exquisiteness is among the commonplaces of life to other men, like the raiment they indue at rising, like the bread they weary of eating, like the daisies they trample under blind feet ; knowing not what raiment is to him who has felt the ravening wind, knowing not what bread is to him who has lacked all bread, knowing not what daisies are to him whose feet have wandered in grime. How can these elves be to such men what they are to me, who am damned to the eternal loss of them ? Why was I never told that the laurel could soothe no hunger, that the laurel could staunch no pang, that the laurel could return no kiss ? But needed I to be told it, did I not know it ? Yes, my brain knew it, my heart knew it not. And now——

At half-past eleven.

O lente, lente currite, noctis equi !

Just ! they are the words of that other trafficker in his own soul.* Me, like him, the time tracks swiftly down ; I can fly no farther, I fall

* Faustus, in the last scene of Marlowe's play.

exhausted, the fanged hour fastens on my throat: they will break into the room, my guilt will burst its grave and point at me; I shall be seized, I shall be condemned, I shall be executed; I shall be no longer I, but a nameless lump on which they pasture worms. Or perhaps the hour will herald some yet worser thing, some sudden death, some undreamable, ghastly surprise—ah! what is that at the door there, that, that with *her* eyes? Nothing: the door is shut. Surely, surely, I am not to die now? Destiny steals upon a man asleep or off his guard, not when he is awake, as I am awake, at watch, as I am at watch, wide-eyed, vigilant, alert. Oh, miserable hope! Watch the eaves of your house, to bar the melting of the snow; or guard the gateways of the clouds, to bar the forthgoing of the lightning; or guard the four quarters of the heavens, to bar the way of the winds: but what prescient hand can close the Hecatompyloi of fate, what might arrest the hurrying retributions whose multitudinous tramplings converge upon me in a hundred presages, in a hundre shrivelling menaces, down all the echoing avenues of doom? It is but a question of which shall arrive the fleetest and the first. I cease to think. I am all a waiting and a fear. *Twelve!*

At half-past two. Midnight is stricken, and I am unstricken. Guilt, indeed, makes babies of the wisest. Nothing happened; absolutely

nothing. For two hours I watched with lessening expectance: still nothing. I laughed aloud between sudden light-heartedness and scorn. Ineffable fool that I was, I had conjured up death, judgement, doom—heaven knows what, all because a caterpillar had crawled along a leaf! And then, as I might have done before had not terror vitiated my reason, I made essay whether I still retained my power. I retain it. Let me set down for my own enhardiment what the oracle replied to my questioning.

'Have I not promised and kept my promise, shall I not promise and keep? You would be crowned and you shall be crowned. Does your way to achievement lie through misery?—is not that the way to all worth the achieving? Are not half the mill-wheels of the world turned by waters of pain? Mountain summit that would rise into the clouds, can you not suffer the eternal snows? If your heart fail you, turn; I chain you not. I will restore you your oath. I will cancel your bond. Go to the God Who has tenderness for such weaklings: *my* service requires the strong.'

What a slave of my fancy was I! Excellent fool, what! pay the forfeit of my sin and forgo the recompense, recoil from the very gates of conquest? I fear no longer: the crisis is past, the day of promise has begun, I go forward to my destiny; I triumph.

* * * * *

Florentian laid down his pen, and passed into dreams. He saw the crowd, the throne, the waiting laurel, the sunshine, the flashing of rich robes; he heard the universal shout of acclaim, he felt the flush of intoxicating pride. He rose, his form dilating with exultation, and passed, lamp in hand, to the foot of the third statue. The colossal figure leaned above him with its outstretched laurel, its proffered wand, its melancholy face and flowing hair; so lifelike was it that in the wavering flame of the lamp the laurel seemed to move. 'At length, Virgil,' said Florentian, 'at length I am equal with you; Virgil, magician and poet, your crown shall descend on me!'

One. . Two. . Three! The strokes of the great clock shook the chamber, shook the statues; and after the strokes had ceased, the echoes were still prolonged. Was it only an echo?

Boom!

Or—*was it the cathedral bell?*

Boom!

It *was* the cathedral bell. Yet a third time, sombre, surly, ominous as the bay of a nearing bloodhound, the sound came down the wind.

Boom!

Horror clutched his heart. He looked up at the statue. He turned to fly. But a few hairs, tangled round the lowered wand, for a single instant held him like a cord. He knew, without seeing, that they were the three white hairs.

When, later in the day, a deputation of officials came to escort Florentian to the place fixed for his coronation, they were informed that he had been all night in his Chamber of Statues, nor had he yet made his appearance. They waited while the servant left to fetch him. The man was away some time, and they talked gaily as they waited : a bird beat its wings at the window ; through the open door came in a stream of sunlight, and the fragmentary song of a young girl passing :

> Oh, syne she tripped, and syne she ran
> (The water-lily's a lightsome flower),
> All for joy and sunshine weather
> The lily and Marjorie danced together,
> As he came down from Langley Tower.
>
> There's a blackbird sits on Langley Tower,
> And a throstle on Glenlindy's tree ;
> The throstle sings ' Robin, my heart's love ! '
> And the blackbird, ' Bonnie, sweet Marjorie ! '

The man came running back at last, with a blanched face and a hushed voice. ' Come,' he said, ' and see ! '

They went and saw.

At the feet of Virgil's statue Florentian lay dead. A dark pool almost hid that dark stain on the ground, the three lines on his forehead were etched in blood, and across the shattered brow lay a ponderous gilded wreath ; while over

the extinguished altar-fire the idol seemed to quiver its derisive tongue.

'He is already laurelled,' said one, breaking at length the silence; 'we come too late.'

Too late. The crown of Virgil, magician and poet, had descended on him.

THE POETS' POET

HERE s a poet who is just poetry, and the stuff of poetry; whose narrative—a mere vehicle for his ideas—is a tissue of romantic fancy, careless of manners or character, of interest epic or dramatic. He has been much beloved of poets, and little of that vague entity, the 'general reader.' Shakespeare had read him much: Milton called him master; he made Cowley a poet two hundred years ago, Keats a poet the other day, and who shall say how many in the illustrious line between? Raleigh and Sidney were his lovers in life; for they also were poets. Raleigh might hail in him a double kinship, as poet and explorer. Was not Spenser indeed a great explorer, among the greatest in that age of adventure, when a man got up in the morning and said, 'I have an idea. If you have nothing better to do, let us go continent-hunting.' And he that had not found an island or so was accounted a fellow of no spirit.

Well, Spenser for his share rediscovered Poetry; or, at least, made Poetry possible. It is among the strangest of strange things that the early sixteenth century should have lisped and stammered where the fourteenth had sung with full mouth; that where the middle ages had led with Chaucer, it should follow with Skelton; that Surrey, Wyatt, and Spenser's immediate forerunners should doubtfully experiment in an art of which Chaucer had been consummate master. The tongue of Chaucer was changed;

the methods of Chaucer held good. Yet the poets were a people of a stammering tongue ; their art had gone back to infancy ; and things were at such a pass that the egregious Harvey was for setting the English Muses to their *gradus ad Parnassum* and the penning (singing were a misnomer) of obscene horrors styled hexameters, elegiacs, and the like. Then came Spenser, and found again that land of Poetry, more golden than any El Dorado towards which Raleigh ever set his bold-questing keel. He joined hands with Chaucer across the years : even the metre of his earlier poems is Chaucer's. A swarm of adventurers followed their Columbus ; and English Poetry was.

For all which, outside the poets, he got little more recognition than he gets now. To a cultured Queen and her Court he cried, in new and unmatched verse, that :

> Fame with golden wings aloft doth fly
> Above the reach of ruinous decay,
> And with brave plumes doth beat the azure sky
> Admired of base-born men from far away :
> Then who so will with virtuous deeds essay
> To mount to heaven, on Pegasus must ride,
> And with sweet poets' verse be glorified.
>
> For not to have been dipt in Lethe lake
> Could save the son of Thetis from to die ;
> But that blind bard did him immortal make
> With verses dipt in dew of Castaly :
> Which made the Eastern Conqueror to cry—
> ' O fortunate young man, whose virtue found
> So brave a trump, thy noble acts to sound ! '

What deaf adder could withstand such charming ? ' With verses dipt in dew of Castaly '—can you not hear the delicate dewy drip of that exquisitely musical line ?

> Provide, therefore, ye Princes, while ye may,
> That of the Muses ye may honoured be,

exhorted the poet in logical conclusion : and the Princes ' provided '—on the cheap. The Cecils and Elizabeths rated their ' immortality ' a good deal below the pay of a foreign spy.

' Greatest Gloriane,' like a many be-rhymed ladies, probably yawned over her *Faëry Queen* and one may be sure never got to the end of it. It would be curious to inquire how many lovers of poetry have read through it or *The Excursion.* The *Faëry Queen* is in truth a poem that no man can read through save as a duty, and in a series of arduous campaigns (so to speak). The later books of it steadily fail in power ; but that is not all. The Spenserian stanza, beautiful for a time, in the course of four hundred or so pages becomes a very wearisome and cumbrous narrative form. The repetition of it grows monotonous ; it fatigues by the perpetual discontinuity. Spenser himself seems to find it sometimes cumbrous, in the end. You have occasional lines like—

> Until they both do hear what she to them will say.

No, the *Faëry Queen* must not be read on end ; it is a poem to linger over and dip into. It

is, indeed, as much a series of poems as the *Idylls of the King*. It is not a great poem as its model, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, is a great poem ; for Spenser has planned on a scale beyond his physical power of endurance, and its completion would have been only so much superfluous evidence of the fact. Its waning power was not caused by waning genius ; for in the same year with the latest books he published his magnificent lyrical poems. But if not a great poem it is great poetry ; nay, we might say it contains great poems.

The obvious qualities of it and its author are grown mere truisms. He is princely in fancy rather than imagination. His gift of vision (in a specialized sense of the word) is unapproached. Every one has remarked upon that faculty of seeing visions, and presenting them as before the bodily eye : the *Faëry Queen* is a gallery hung with the rarest tapestries, an endless procession of dream-pictures. There is no emotion, save the emotion of beauty. Yet incidentally, like the exclamations of a dreaming man, he will utter brief passages of tenderest pathos, or exultant joy :

> Nought is there under heaven's wide hollowness
> That moves more dear compassion of mind,
> Than beauty brought to unworthy wretchedness.

The mournful sweetness of those lines is insurpassable ; and they are quintessential Spenser. Yet it is unluckily characteristic of

him, too, that he mars half the effect of this perfect passage by not stopping with its completion, but following it with a line which makes an anti-climax, and is too manifestly inserted for rhyme's sake :

> Through envy's snares, or fortune's freaks unkind.

One might almost take that little passage as a text for one's whole disquisition on Spenser. For, after all, it is not in the richly luxuriant descriptive embroidery, or the pictures brushed in with words as with line and colour, which are traditionally quoted by this poet's critics, that the highest Spenser lies. The secret of him is shut in those three lines.

Wherein lies their power ? The language is so utterly plain that an uninspired poet would have fallen upon baldness. Yet Spenser is a mine of diction (as was remarked to us by a poet who had worked in that mine). But here he had no need for his gorgeous opulence of diction : a few commonest words, and the spell was worked. It is all a matter of relation : the words take life from each other, and become an organism, as with Coleridge. And it is a matter of music ; an integral element in the magic of the passage is its sound. In this necromancy, by which the most elementary words, entering into a secret relation of sense and sound, acquire occult property, Spenser is a master. And that which gives electric life to their relation is the Spenserian subtlety of

emotion. Here it is specifically pathos, at another time it is joyous exultation, or again the pleasure of beauty. But behind and underneath all these emotional forms, the central and abiding quality, the essence of his emotion, is peace, and the radiance of peace. The final effect of all, in this and kindred passages, is lyrical.

Yes, lyrical. We are well-nigh minded to write ourselves down arch-heretics, and say that the *Faëry Queen* is a superb error. Spenser, it almost seems to us, was a supreme lyric poet who, by the influence of tradition and example, was allured to spend his strength in narrative poetry, and found his true path only at the close of his literary career. Throughout the *Faëry Queen* he is happy when he drops narration to dream dreams, and touches his serenest height in some brief, casual access of lyric feeling such as we have quoted. And in his last years, before misfortune silenced him, he wrote an all-too-small, precious handful of lyrics, which cover but a few pages, yet are greater than all his 'great' poem together, flowing with milk and honey of poetry though it be.

In those grand Platonic *Hymns to Beauty*, in the *Prothalamion* and *Epithalamion*, all his finest qualities are gathered into organic wholes, sublimated by a lyric ardour which is the radiant effluence of central peace. Joy never had such expression as in the *Epithalamion*,

so serenely noble that its intensity of joy may almost be missed, as the swift interflux of the blue heaven cheats us with the aspect of perfect calm. To express supreme joy is the most difficult of tasks (as a critic has remarked), far more difficult than to express intense sadness, which is the chosen aim of most modern poetry. Here it is supremely expressed, in connexion with the culminating point of natural joy; and is ennobled by the interfused presence of something loftier and more perfect than joy—that static joy which is peace. How well could we have forgone the full latter half of the *Faëry Queen* for some twenty more of such consummate lyrics! But Spenser found his greatest gift, his truest line of work, all too late, when the night was closing on him wherein no man can work—the night of poverty, ruin, and sorrow-hastened age.

SIDNEY'S PROSE

AMONG prose-writers a peculiar interest attaches to the poets who have written prose, who can both soar and walk. For to this case the image will not apply of the eagle overbalanced in walking by the weight of his great wings. Nay, far from the poets' being astray in prose-writing, it might plausibly be contended that English prose, as an art, is but a secondary stream of the Pierian fount, and owes its very origin to the poets. The first writer one remembers with whom prose became an art was Sir Philip Sidney. And Sidney was a poet.

If Chaucer, as has been said, is Spring, it is modern, premature Spring, followed by an interval of doubtful weather. Sidney is the very Spring—the later May. And in prose he is the authentic, only Spring. It is a prose full of young joy, and young power, and young inexper ence, and young melancholy, which is the wilfulness of joy; full of young fertility, wantoning in its own excess. Every nerve of it is steeped in deliciousness, which one might confuse with the softness of a decadent and effeminate age like our own, so much do the extremes of the literary cycle meet. But there is all the difference between the pliancy of youthful growth and the languor of decay. This martial and fiery progeny of a martial and fiery age is merely relaxing himself

to the full in the interval of his strenuous life's campaign, indulging the blissful dreams of budding manhood—a virile Keats, one might say. You feel these martial spirits revelling in the whole fibre of his style. It is, indeed, the writing of a child; or, perhaps, of an exceptional boy, who still retains the roaming, luxuriant sweetness of a child's fancy; who has broken into the store-closet of literary conserves, and cloyed himself in delicious contempt of law and ignorance of satiety, tasting all capricious dainties as they come. The *Arcadia* runs honey; with a leisurely deliberation of relish, epicureanly savoured to the full, all alien to our hurried and tormented age.

Sidney's prose is treasurable, not only for its absolute merits, but as the bud from which English prose, that gorgeous and varied flower, has unfolded. It is in every way the reverse of modern prose. Our conditions of hurry carry to excess the abrupt style, resolved into its ultimate elements of short and single sentences. Sidney revels in the periodic style—long sentences, holding in suspension many clauses, which are shepherded to a full and sonorous close. But with him this style is inchoate: it is not yet logically compacted, the clauses do not follow inevitably, are not gradually evolved and expanded like the blossom from the seed. The sentences are loose, often inartificial and tyro-like, tacked together by a profuse employment of relatives and present participles. At times the grammar

becomes confused, and falls to pieces. But this looseness has a characteristic effect : it conduces to the general quality of Sidney's style. Here, truly, the style is the man. The long, fluctuant sentences, impetuously agglomerated rather than organically grown, have a copious and dissolving melody, quite harmonious with the subject-matter and the nature of the man. Jeremy Taylor, too, mounds his magnificent sentences rather than constructs them : but the effect is different and more masculine ; nay, they are structural compared with Sidney's —so far had prose travelled during the interim.

The *Arcadia* is tedious to us in its unvarying chivalrous fantasy and unremittent lusciousness long drawn-out. Yet it has at moments a certain primitive tenderness, natural and captivating in no slight degree. No modern romancer could show us a passage like this, so palpitating in its poured-out feminine compassion. The hero has attempted suicide by his mistress's couch :

> Therefore, getting with speed her weak, though well-accorded, limbs out of her sweetened bed, as when jewels are hastily pulled out of some rich coffer, she spared not the nakedness of her tender feet, but, I think, borne as fast with desire as fear carried *Daphne*, she came running to *Pyrocles*, and finding his spirits something troubled with the fall, she put by the bar that lay close to him, and straining him in her well-beloved embracements ; ' My comfort, my joy, my life,' said she, ' what haste have you to kill your *Philoclea* with the most cruel torment that ever lady suffered ? '

What a delightful chivalry of heart there is in it all! How exquisitely felt that phrase, 'her sweetened bed'! How charmingly fancied the image which follows it; and how beautiful—'she spared not the nakedness of her tender feet'! How womanly Philoclea's outburst, and the tender eagerness of the whole picture! In other passages Sidney shows his power over that pastoral depiction dear to the Elizabethans—artificial, if you will, refined and courtly, yet simple as the lisp of babes:

> There were hills which garnished their proud heights with trees; humble valleys, whose bare estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers; meadows, enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets, which, being lined with most pleasant shade, were witnessed so, too, by a cheerful disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep, feeding with sober security; while the lambs, with bleating oratory craved the dam's comfort. Here a shepherd's boy piping, as though he should never be old; there a young shepherdess knitting, and withal singing; and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work and her hands kept time to her voice-music.

Sidney is not without that artificial balance and antithesis which, in its most excessive form, we know as euphuism. This, and the other features of his style, appear where we should least expect them; for his style has not the flexibility which can adjust itself to varying themes. How shall an age accustomed to the direct battle-music of Kipling and Steevens

admit such tortuous narratives of conflict as his? Assuredly he might have learned much from the forthright old Northern sagas, if he had known them, in the art of warlike narrative. But his best prose is, after all, to be found, not in the romantic *Arcadia*, but in the *Defence of Poesy*. There he has had a set purpose of conviction, of attack and defence before him, and is not constantly concerned with artistic writing. The result is more truly artistic for having less explicit design of art. We get not only melodiously-woven sentences, but also touches of true fire and vigour: he is even homely on occasion. It is from the *Defence of Poesy* that critics mostly choose their 'Sidneian showers of sweet discourse.'

Very plainly Sidney was no believer in that modern fanaticism—art for art's sake. But from his own standpoint, which is the eternal standpoint, no finer apology for poetry has ever been penned. The construction has not the perfection of subsequent prose—of Raleigh at his best, or Browne. The sentences do not always stop at their climax, but are weakened by a tagged-on continuation. But, for all the partial inexpertness, it is splendid writing, with already the suggestion of the arresting phrase and stately cadences presently to be in English prose. He is specially felicitous in those sayings of direct and homely phrase which have become household words: 'A tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from

the chimney-corner,' or that other well-known saying that Chevy-Chase moved him 'like the sound of a trumpet. It was a great and original genius, perhaps in prose (where he had no models) even more than in poetry, which was cut short on the field of Zutphen; even as the Spanish Garcilaso, also young, noble, and a pastoral poet, fell in the breach of a northern town.

SHAKESPEARE'S PROSE

IT might almost be erected into a rule that a great poet is, if he please, also a master of prose. Tennyson in modern times is the great example of a poet who never spoke without his singing-robes. But we feel an instinctive conviction that Tennyson's prose would have been worth having; that it would have been terse, strong, and picturesque—in another fashion from the pictorial English of the Anglo-Saxon revivalists. Indeed, there is manifest reason why a poet should have command over 'that other harmony of prose,' as a great master of both has called it. The higher includes the lower, the more the less. He who has subdued to his hand all the resources of language under the exaltedly difficult and specialized conditions of metre should be easy lord of them in the unhindered forms of prose. Perhaps it is lack of inclination rather than of ability which indisposes a poet for the effort. Perhaps, also, the metrical restraints are to him veritable aids and pinions, the lack of which is severely felt in prose. Perhaps he suffers, like Claudio, 'from too much liberty.'

Though Shakespeare bequeathed us neither letters nor essays, nor so much as a pamphlet, he has not left us without means of estimating what his touch would have been in prose. The evidences of it are scattered through his plays. There is, of course, the plentiful prose-dialogue.

But this can only indirectly give us any notion of what might have been his power as a prose-writer. Dramatic and impersonal, it is directed to reproducing the conversational style of his period, as developed among the picturesque and varying classes of Elizabethan men and women. It is one thing with Rosalind, another with Orlando, another with Beatrice, another with Mistress Ford or Master Page, and yet another with his fools or clowns. Thersites differs from Apemantus, plain-spoken old Lafeu from plain-spoken Kent. At the most we might conjecture hence how Shakespeare talked. And if there be anywhere a suggestion of Shakespeare's talk, we would look for it not so much in the overpowering richness of Falstaff, as in the light, urbane, good-humoured pleasantry of Prince Hal. Prince Hal is evidently a model of the cultivated, quick-witted, intelligent gentleman unbending himself in boon society. In his light dexterity, his high-spirited facility, one seems to discern a reminder of the nimble-witted Shakespeare, as Fuller portrays him in the encounters at the 'Mermaid.' No less do the vein of intermittent seriousness running through his talk, the touches of slightly scornful melancholy, conform to one's idea of what Shakespeare may have been in society. One can imagine him, in some fit of disgust with his companions such as prompted the sonnets complaining of his trade, uttering the contemptuous retort of Prince Hal to Poins:

'It would be every man's thought, and thou art a blessed fellow to think as every man thinks; never a man's thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine.'

The noble speech of Brutus to the Romans would alone prove that Shakespeare had a master's touch in prose. The balance, the antithesis, the terseness, the grave simplicity of diction make it a model in its kind. Yet one can hardly say that this is the fashion in which Shakespeare would have written prose, had he used that vehicle apart from the drama. It was written in this manner for a special purpose—to imitate the laconic style which Plutarch records that Brutus affected. Its laconisms, therefore, exhibit no tendency of the poet's own. To find a passage which we do believe to show his native style we must again go to Prince Hal, in his after-character of Henry V. The whole of the King's encounter with the soldiers, who lay on his shoulders the private consequences of war, affords admirable specimens of prose. But in particular we quote his chief defensive utterance:

> There is no king, be his cause never so spotless, if it come to the arbitrament of swords, can try it out with all unspotted soldiers. Some, peradventure, have on them the guilt of premeditated and contrived murder; some, of beguiling virgins with the broken seals of perjury; some, making the wars their bulwark, that have before gored the gentle bosom of peace with pillage and robbery. Now, if these men have defeated

the law, and outrun native punishment, though they can outstrip men, they have no wings to fly from God : war is His beadle, war is His vengeance ; so that here men are punished, for before-breach of the King's laws, is now the King's quarrel : where they feared the death, they have borne life away; and where they would be safe, they perish. Then if they die unprovided, no more is the King guilty of their damnation, than he was before guilty of those impieties for the which they are now visited. Every subject's duty is the King's, but every subject's soul is his own. Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed, wash every mote out of his conscience ; and dying so, death is to him advantage : or not dying, the time was blessedly lost, wherein such preparation was gained : and in him that escapes, it were not sin to think that, making God so free an offer, He let him outlive that day to see His greatness, and to teach others how they should prepare.

The whole is on a like level, and it is obvious that Shakespeare's interest in his theme has caused him for the moment to forsake dramatic propriety by adopting a structure much more complete and formal than a man would use in unpremeditated talk. It is Shakespeare defending a thesis with the pen, rather than Henry with the tongue. And you have, in consequence, a fine passage of prose, quite original in movement and style, unlike other prose of the period, and characteristic (we venture to think) of Shakespeare himself. You would know that style again. Close-knit, pregnant, with a dexterous use of balance and antithesis,

it is yet excellently direct, fluent, and various, the rhetorical arts carefully restrained, and all insistence on them avoided. Despite its closeness, it is not too close; there s space for free motion: and it has a masculine ring, a cut-and-thrust fashion, which removes it far alike from pedantry on the one hand and poetized prose on the other. Such, or something after this manner, would (we think) have been Shakespeare's native style in prose: not the ultra-formal style he put (for a reason) into the mouth of Brutus.

With the Baconian dispute revived, it is interesting to ask how such passages compare with the known prose of Bacon. The speech of Brutus might possibly be Bacon's, who loved the sententious. But surely not a typical passage such as we have quoted. Take an average extract from Bacon's *Essays:*

> It is worth observing that there is no passion in the mind of man so weak, but it mates and masters the fear of death; and, therefore, death is no such terrible enemy when a man hath so many attendants about him that can win the combat of him. Revenge triumphs over death; Love delights in it; Honour aspireth to it; Grief flieth to it; nay, we read, after Otho, the Emperor, had slain himself, Pity (which is the tenderest of affections) provoked many to die, out of mere compassion to their Sovereign, and as the truest sort of followers.

Grave, cold, slow, affecting an aphoristic brevity, and erring (when it does err) on the

side of pedantry, could this style take on the virile energy and freedom of movement, the equipoise of concision and fluency, which we discern in Henry's speech, as in all Shakespeare's characteristic passages? We cannot think it. And that other style of Bacon's, exemplified in the *Reign of Henry VII*, expanded, formal, in the slow-moving and rather cumbersome periods which he deems appropriate to historic dignity, is yet more distant from Shakespeare. The more one studies Shakespeare, the more clearly one perceives in him a latent but quite individual prose-style, which, had he worked it out, would have been a treasurable addition to the great lineage of English prose.

BEN JONSON'S PROSE

ASKED haphazard to name the poets who were also prose-writers (why have we not developed a single term for the thing, like the French *prosateur?*), few, probably, would think of including Ben Jonson. There is some reason for not thinking of Ben as a prose-writer: he never produced any set and continuous work in prose—not so much as a pamphlet. All he has left us is a collection called *Sylva* or *Timber*, corresponding to the *memorabilia* of what we now call a commonplace book—apparently because it contains the observations which a man thinks are not commonplace. We English have small relish for apophthegms and prose-brevities in general: not among us would a La Rochefoucauld, a Pascal of the *Pensées*, a La Bruyère, have found applause. Selden, or Coleridge's *Table-Talk*, the exceedingly witty 'Characters' of 'Hudibras' Butler, and other admirable literature of the kind, go virtually unread. We want expansion and explanation; we like not being asked to complement the author's wit by our own. So that *Sylva* has small chance, were it better than it is.

We know two Ben Jonsons, it may be said—the Ben of the plays, rugged, strong, pedantic, unsympathetic, often heavy, coarse and repellent even in his humour, where he is strongest; and the Ben of those surprisingly

contrasting lyrics, all too few; small, delicate, and exquisite. It is as though Vulcan took to working in filigree. Here, in *Sylva*, is another Ben, who increases our estimation of the man. We have often thought there was a measure of affinity between the two Johnsons—Ben and Sam. Their surnames are the same save in spelling; both have a scriptural Christian name; both were large and burly men, of strong, unbeautiful countenance—'a mountain belly and a rocky face' the dramatist ascribed to himself. Both were convivial spirits, with a magnetic tendency to form a personal following; 'the tribe of Ben' was paralleled by the tribe of Samuel. Both were men distinguished for learning unusual among the literary men of their time. Both carried it over the verge of pedantry, and at the same time had strong sense. Both were notably combative. Both were mighty talkers, and founded famous literary clubs which made the 'Mermaid' and the 'Mitre' illustrious among taverns. Both, it seems pretty sure, were overbearing. You can imagine Benjamin as ready to browbeat a man as Samuel. There the parallel ends; Ben was not distinguished for religiosity or benevolence, Ben was never cited as a moralist. But in *Sylva*, it seems to us, we pick it up again.

There is the strong common-sense, and the uncommon sense, which we find in the Doctor's talk; there is the directness, the straightness

to the point. There is, moreover, a robust manliness, an eye which discerns, and a hand which strikes for the pith of any matter, a contained vigour which wastes no stroke. Even the style is not without analogies to the spoken style of the great conversationalist—so different from his written style. It has nothing of the occasional stateliness, the latinities, which appeared even in the Doctor's talk. But on the Doctor's vernacular side it has its kinships. It is clean, hardy, well-knit, excellently idiomatic; pithy and well-poised as an English cudgel. Its marked tendency to the use of balance is a further Johnsonian affinity. We would not, however, be understood to say that it is like the style of Johnson's talk. It is individual, and has the ring common to the Elizabethan style. But it has certain qualities which seem to us akin to the spirit of Johnson's talk. One striking feature is its modernity. It is more modern than Shakespeare's prose. There are many sentences which, with the alteration of a word or so, the substitution of a modern for an archaic inflection, would pass for very good and pure modern prose. It is singular that prose so vernacular should have had no successor, and that so wide an interval should have elapsed between him and Dryden.

Yet, if Jonson influenced no follower, it certainly deserves more notice than it has received that, thus early, prose so native,

showing so much the mettle of its English pasture, could be written. The average style is seen at once in such a passage as this :

> No man is so foolish, but may give another good counsel sometimes ; and no man is so wise, but may easily err, if he will take no other counsel but his own. But very few men are wise by their own counsel or learned by their own teaching. For he that was only taught by himself, hath a fool for a master.

Save for the antiquated inflection of ' hath,' that is modern enough. Johnson could put a thing with almost—or quite—brutal terseness ; but Ben is still more uncompromisingly effective, as in the last sentence of the following quotation :

> Many men believe not themselves what they would persuade others, and less do the things which they would impose on others . . . only they set the sign of the Cross over their outer doors, and sacrifice to their guts and their groin in their inner closets.

It has not the sweetness and light of modern culture; it is ursine: but it sticks in the memory. It is interesting, in reading *Sylva*, to note that Jonson had already formed an opinion on the contest between the Ancients and Moderns, long before it became a burning question in the latter Seventeenth, and brought forth Swift's *Battle of the Books* in the Eighteenth Century. If any man might have been looked for to be a bigoted champion of the Ancients, it was Jonson, who marred his own work and

would have gone hard to mar that of others by his pedantic insistence on classical authority, and lamented Shakespeare's 'little Latin and less Greek.' Yet he maintains a clear-sighted attitude of respectful independence.

One cannot but smile a little, none the less, at Ben's disclaimer of sects, his 'I will have no man addict himself to me': Ben, the focus of disciples and leader in many a literary *fracas*. Yet, despite his upholding of the just rights of the present against the past, he was not satisfied with the present. It is a strange fact that the complaints of decadence in letters, which we hear now, come to us like an echo from the pages of the *Sylva*. In one passage he observes:

> I cannot think Nature is so spent and decayed, that she can bring forth nothing worth her former years. She is always the same, like herself, and when she collects her strength, is abler still. Men are decayed, and studies; she is not.

Who could conceive that this last pessimist sentence was written by the friend of Shakespeare, the sharer in the glorious prime of English literature, and one of the great literary periods of the world? Even in his day he evidently felt the scarcity of true appreciation.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PROSE

IGNORED by the general voice of the Eighteenth Century, championed by Coleridge, De Quincey, Ruskin, and other writers of the early or middle Nineteenth Century, Seventeenth Century prose has again suffered some eclipse as a profitable model through the more recent revulsion towards the prose of Queen Anne and her immediate successors. And now its claims are again zealously urged by the writer of a very knowledgeable article in the *Quarterly Review*, whose views are sound and discerning, though we cannot say the same of his *obiter dicta*. What, for example, are we to think of the pronouncement that ' of all our writers of great merit, from the Restoration to the present century, Newman alone succeeded in recovering that mastery of rhythm which was the characteristic ' of pre-Restoration prose ? Was there no ' mastery of rhythm ' in Ruskin, none in De Quincey—to name but two ? De Quincey's rhythm was not that of the Seventeenth Century, indeed, though based on the rhythm of the Seventeenth Century ; but it was a better thing—it was characteristically and recognizably his own. Consider merely that passage in the ' Confessions,' ending with the words ' I awoke . . . and cried, " I will sleep no more ! " '—which

for superbly marshalled complexity of structure and choric intricacy of sound, for mastery over the counterpoint of rhythmic prose, is perhaps the most amazing in the language. The congregating sentences throng like the assembling of armies, with growing innumerable agitation herded and precipitantly accelerated to the multitudinous crash of the close.

But the writer does not simply extol the prose of the Seventeenth Century for those qualities generally confessed. He seeks to show that it possessed likewise the secret of a vernacular style, available for workaday use. It has been said that the Seventeenth Century men, with all their pomps and splendours, worked out no style fit for average use; whereas the writers who underwent French influence after the Restoration did achieve this aim. To which he answers that the average style of the Restoration and the earlier Eighteenth Century was as bad as it could be. The eminent writers, most of them, were largely dominated by the Seventeenth Century—Swift, for instance, who went back to those earlier writers to get marrow for his style. It was Johnson who founded the average prose style which (in decadence enough) still sways the average man when he takes up his pen; and Johnson based himself on Sir Thomas Browne. But the tradition of a truly vernacular style had never failed from the time of Elizabeth (though the prevalent belief is that it became extinct with the Seventeenth Century

giants) ; and it could have been developed into an excellent common style but for the irruption of French influences. In tracing this vernacular current in the Seventeenth Century to which he mainly devotes his article, the writer fixes with acute perception on Ben Jonson as the restorer and upholder of the Tudor tradition, the popular element in the style of his day.

The resemblance between the sturdy vernacular of Jonson and the sturdy vernacular of Dryden was not, it seems, accidental. Dryden makes express reference to the principles advocated in Jonson's *Sylva*. And Jonson had a chain of successors. One need not, however, go further than Browne himself to show that pre-Restoration prose was not always a tissue of long periodic sentences, now unduly loose, now unduly latinized in construction. Browne was more idiomatic in structure than the Ciceronian Hooker. But the admirable knitting of his sentences was not due merely to a better study of English idiom. He was steeped in classic models more compact and pregnant than Cicero. Like his French contemporaries, he was influenced by the great Latin rhetoricians, Lucan, Ovid, and Seneca ; whose rivalry it was to put an idea into the fewest possible words. Lucan, Browne quotes more than any other Latin poet. His style is usually represented by passages such as the opening or closing paragraphs in the famous last chapter of the

Urn-Burial; passages which combine severely logical structure with a motion like the solemn winging of many seraphim. But the greater portion of that same chapter is terse and sententious, an aphoristic style. When his thought moves him to eloquent rhetoric, the sentence dispreads like a mounting pinion. But the level style is brief and serried, like this:

> There is no antidote against the opium of time, which temporarily considereth all things; our fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our survivors. Grave-stones tell truth scarce forty years. Generations pass while some trees stand, and old families last not three oaks.

Or again:

> To be nameless in worthy deeds, exceeds an infamous history. The Canaanitish woman lives more happily without a name than Herodias with one.

This style is a far better foundation for a general style than the ponderous structure which Johnson reared upon it. Nor, with all his latinities (the supposed excessive proportion of which is grossly exaggerated) was Browne to seek in the vulgar tongue. On the contrary, he blends it in his prose with an excellent mastery, as may partly be seen even in these brief extracts.

But for direct use of the vernacular, the *Quarterly* reviewer points with justice to men like Fuller, South, Chillingworth, and especially Baxter—whose vigour and plainness he com-

pares to Cobbett's. He points, also, to the neglected writers of 'Characters,' and, in particular, the best of them—'Hudibras' Butler. It is another point on which we commend his acumen. We cannot go the length of decrying Butler's verse in order to enhance his prose, as the reviewer does: we are scandalized by the assertion that *Hudibras* is written in 'a clever mechanical kind of verse.' But that the 'Characters' are most undeservedly neglected we have long held. They are witty and full of Hudibrastic point; while the style is vernacular, clear, and strong—though we will not add (with the reviewer) 'as Swift's.' But these, and Izaak Walton, though they prove that vernacular prose was maintained in the Seventeenth Century, do not disturb the fact that the loftier style was in the ascendant, the style of Hooker, Bacon, Taylor, Browne, Milton. There was no Shakespeare of prose in that day, says the reviewer, who wedded and wielded both styles equally. But is a Gallic uniformity of basic style necessary or desirable in English? Does it matter what style is written by the unliterary? Is not the wide latitude and freedom of style among the masters of modern prose, wherein each is free to follow his own affinities, a thing more precious, more suited to our English individualism, than the finished but after all limited perfection of style which France has attained by a contrary method? We think it

is. We think it better that we should bring forth out of our treasuries new things and old, than develop on a fixed and contracting line, however perfect the results secured by such narrowing. Individual freedom is the English heritage, in letters as in life.

GOLDSMITH'S PROSE

IN the prose style of that delightful poet and universal man of letters, Oliver Goldsmith, the man himself counts for so much that it is impossible to write of one without the other. One can trace the derivations of that style it is true; one can discern that it owes much to French influence. Style does not come out of the blue, be it ever so native to the man, and however authentic his genius. But when you have recognized its Gallic derivation, that which gives it breath of life, and radiates from it in personal fascination, is Goldsmith himself —the careless Goldsmith, the much-tried Goldsmith, the sweet-natured Goldsmith, the Goldsmith who took his troubles like a happy-go-lucky child: an Irish child withal, bright, emotional, and candid.

Yet all this would not have produced the inexpressibly exhilarating mixture we call Goldsmith, limpid and effervescent, touched with the simplest sentiment, enriched with the most varied experience, unfailing in dexterous grace, had this Irish child not been also a child of the eighteenth century. Into this artificial, unruffled eighteenth century, which made composure not merely an inward ideal but an external law was borne this Celtic child, uttering himself right out with a modern sincerity, and an unconsciousness not often modern. The result, at its best, is a combina-

tion of qualities singularly piquant and unreproducible. Born into the nineteenth century with such a temperament, a life so troublous and largely *manqué*, Goldsmith would have had the *weltschmerz* pretty badly. He would have wailed the impossibility of things; he would have taken the bandage from his sores; his gaiety would have been dashed with some eclipse. Born into the eighteenth century, he had no encouragement to the indulgence of world-smart. He kept his sores under decent covering, knowing there was small sympathy for literary groans; he looked neither back nor forward, took the hour as it came, and piped against his troubles if Fate gave him half a chance. That European tour, when, half scholarly impostor, half minstrel, he alternately challenged disputant (not forthcoming) and fluted for a living, is a type of his whole career. The Irishman of that character no longer exists: and if personal dignity gains by his vanishing, the gaiety of nations suffers. No wonder that the dignifiedly Britannic, and a trifle priggish, Johnsonian circle was half scandalized by the advent amongst it of this improvident creature of Nature.

Johnson, sternly moralizing under adversity, meets Goldie piping against it, and shakes his unambrosial wig. Yet it says much for the formidable old Doctor that he seems to have appreciated the simple, sweet-natured genius better than did the rest of his circle. It is the

fashion to discredit Boswell's stories of Goldsmith on the ground of envy. Jealous they self-evidently are, but they are too racy of the Goldsmith soil not to be true. The *naïf* vanity is the vanity of a child. One can imagine Goldie breaking his shins in imitating a mountebank—and laugh with kindly amusement. Where talk was upremely valued, he would plunge in, sink or swim. But only that bewigged eighteenth century circle could sneer at him for the harmless weakness. He knew he had the brilliance in him, and pathetically hoped he could teach it to shine at the call of the moment. A little ugly man, slow-tongued and unattractive to women, he sought indemnity for his maimed life in plum-coloured coats, Tokay, and the sorry loves of Covent Garden. ' Goldie was wild, sir,' and small cause for wonder.

But all that weakness is strength in his charming prose. There was valiance, could the Doctor have seen it, in that clear fountain of gaiety which turned all his misfortunes to brightness and favour. It is his sunny wit and sweet heart which clarifies his style ; his lovable humour draws for us perpetual refreshment from the vicissitudes of a life as hard as ever fell to struggling poet. What modern writer is brave child enough to extract sunshine from the recollection of his own darkest hours ? A more admirable example you could not have of Goldsmith's prose than that exquisitely sly description of George's search for a l ving in the

Vicar of Wakefield. Yet small was the laughter in the experiences which furnished it to poor Goldie; and it was written when he was still struggling for bread. The narrative s saturated with humour as delicate as it is buoyant, and kindly with large good nature towards the very rogues and blockheads who have set their heels on the helpless seeker for bread. The mere technique is that of a master: every sentence deftly shaped, yet easy as the song of a bird; the phrasing unobtrusively perfect, as we have lost the art of perfecting it in our self-conscious age. He had, indeed, the great heritage of eighteenth century prose, which a succession of masters had shaped to the purposes of wit and humour. But he had lightened it, made it nimble and touched it with an artless-seeming grace, as t never was before. This in the very day when Johnson had compelled English prose to the following of his own deep-draughted movement. Yet, by a singular stretch of blind jealousy, Boswell and others accused him of imitating the Gargantuan Doctor!

Perhaps Johnson may have had some influence on his serious and 'elevated' style, which is antithetic and not a little rhetorical. Perhaps Johnson, also, taught him compactness of structure and grammatical accuracy, which are invaluable even in his lightest style. But, though he 'touched nothing he did not adorn,' and was as irresistible in the pathos of poor

Olivia as in the humours of Mr Jenkinson or Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Skeggs, it is as a comedian that one loves him best. That gay humour could pass from demure slyness to the most buoyant farce; and the combination of extravagance with the deftest delicacy is perhaps his most characteristic and felicitous achievement. Beau Tibbs, in the *Citizen of the World*, is farce; but farce which nowadays would pass for comedy. But Beau Tibbs is too great to be displayed in a mere extract; he must be read entire. Why is Goldsmith unknown at the present day by that delightful series of papers? If the cream of his comedy be in the plays and the *Vicar*, yet, for the sake of Beau Tibbs alone, the *Citizen* should be resuscitated. And if this inadequate article sends one fresh reader to those neglected essays, it will not have been written uselessly.

CRASHAW

MODERN poets have singled Crashaw as a man of genius and a source of inspiration. Coleridge declared that Crashaw's *Hymn to St Teresa* was present to his mind while he was writing the second part of *Christabel ;* ' if, indeed, by some subtle process of the mind it did not suggest the first thought of the whole poem.'

Lyric poetry is a very nclusive term. It includes Milton and Herrick, Burns and Shelley, *Tintern Abbey* and *The Grecian Urn* the odes of Coventry Patmore and the songs of Tennyson. But its highest form—that which is to other lyric forms what the epic is to the narrative poem or the ballad—is the form typically represented by the ode. This order of lyric may again be divided into such lyrics as are distinguished by stately structure, and such as are distinguished by ardorous abandonment. In the former kind ardour *may* be present, though under the continual curb of the structure ; and this is the highest species of the lyric. In the latter kind the ardour is naked and predominant : it is to the former kind what the flight of the skylark is to the flight of the eagle. The conspicuous first appearance of the former kind in English poetry was the monumental *Epithalamion* of Spenser. Ardour cannot, as a rule, be predicated of Spenser ; but *there* is ardour of the most ethereal

impulse, equipoised throughout with the most imperial and imperious structure. For the development of the latter kind English poetry had to await the poet of *Prometheus Unbound*. But its first, almost unnoticed and unperfected appearance, was in the work of Richard Crashaw. His age gave the preference to Cowley, in whose odes there is unlimited ostentation of dominating ardour without the reality, the result being mere capricious and unmeaning dislocation of form. Too much of the like is there in Crashaw ; but every now and again he ascends into real fervour, such as makes metre and diction plastic to its own shaping spirit of inevitable rightness. This is the eminent praise of Crashaw, that he marks an epoch, a turn of the tide in English lyric, though the crest of the tide was not to come till long after, though—like all first innovators —he not only suffered present neglect, but has been overshadowed by those who came a century after him.

He is fraught with suggestion—infinite suggestion More than one poet has drawn much from him, yet much remains to be drawn. But it is not only for poets he exists. Those who read for enjoyment can find in him abundant delight, if they will be content (as they are content with Wordsworth) to grope through his plenteous infelicity. He is no poet of the human and household emotions ; he has not pathos, or warm love, or any of the qualities

which come home to the natural kindly race of men. But how fecund is his brilliant imagery, rapturous ethereality! He has, at his best, an extraordinary cunning of diction, cleaving like gold-leaf to its object. In such a poem as *The Musician and the Nightingale* the marvel of diction becomes even too conscious; in the moment of wondering at the miracle, we feel that the miracle is too researched: it is the feat of an amazing gymnast in words rather than of an unpremeditating angel. Yet this poem is an extraordinary verbal achievement, and there are numerous other examples in which the miracle seems as unconscious as admirable.

For an example of his sacred poems, take the *Nativity*, which has less deforming conceit than most. Very different from Milton's great Ode, which followed it, yet it has its own characteristic beauty. The shepherds sing it turn by turn—as thus:

> Gloomy night embraced the place
> Where the noble Infant lay.
> The Babe looked up and showed His face;
> In spite of darkness, it was day.
> It was Thy day, Sweet! and did rise,
> Not from the East, but from Thine eyes.

Here is seen one note of Crashaw—the human and lover-like tenderness which informs his sacred poems, differentiating them from the conventional style of English sacred poetry, with its solemn aloofness from celestial things.

I saw the curled drops, soft and slow
  Come hovering o'er the place's head;
Offering their whitest sheets of snow
  To furnish the fair Infant's bed:
Forbear, said I; be not too bold,
Your fleece is white, but 'tis too cold.

I saw the obsequious Seraphim
  Their rosy fleece of fire bestow,
For well they now can spare their wings,
  Since heaven itself lies here below.
Well done, said I; but are you sure
Your down so warm will pass for pure?

In the second stanza is shown the fire of his fancy; in 'The curled drops,' etc., the happiness of his diction. In *The Weeper* (a poem on the Magdalen), amid stanzas of the most frigid conceit, are others of the loveliest art in conception and expression:

The dew no more will weep
  The primrose's pale cheek to deck:
The dew no more will sleep
  Nuzzled in the Lily's neck;
Much rather would it be thy tear,
And leave them both to tremble here.

* * * *

Not in the Evening's eyes
  When they red with weeping are
For the Sun that dies,
  Sits Sorrow with a face so fair.
Nowhere but here did ever meet
  Sweetness sad, sadness so sweet.

Two more alien poets could not be conceived than Crashaw and Browning. Yet in the last couplet of these most exquisite stanzas we have a direct coincidence with Browning's line :

> Its sad in sweet, its sweet in sad.

In the *Hymn to St Teresa* are to be found the most beautiful delicacies of language and metre. Listen to this (*à propos* of Teresa's childish attempt to run away and become a martyr among the Moors) :

> She never undertook to know
> What Death with Love should have to do ;
> Nor has she e'er yet understood
> Why to show love she should shed blood ;
> Yet though she cannot tell you why,
> She can love, and she can die.

The wonderfully dainty *Wishes to a Supposed Mistress* shows what Crashaw might have been as an amative poet :

> Whoe'er she be,
> That not impossible She,
> That shall command my heart and me ;
>
> Where'er she lie,
> Locked up from mortal eye
> In shady leaves of Destiny :

And so on through a series of unequal but often lovely stanzas. So, too, does *Love's Horoscope*. His epitaphs are among the sweetest and most artistic even of that age, so cunning in such kind of verse. For instance, that on a young gentleman :

> Eyes are vocal, tears have tongues,
> And there be words not made with lungs—
> Sententious showers ; O let them fall !
> Their cadence is rhetorical !

With what finer example can I end than the close of *The Flaming Heart*, Crashaw's second hymn to St Teresa ?

> Oh, thou undaunted daughter of desires !
> By all thy dower of lights and fires ;
> By all the eagle in thee, all the dove ;
> By all thy lives and deaths of love ;
> By thy large draughts of intellectual day,
> And by thy thirsts of love more large than they ;
> By all thy brim-filled bowls of fierce desire,
> By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire ;
> By the full kingdom of that final kiss,
> That seized thy parting soul, and sealed thee His ;
> By all the Heaven thou hast in Him
> (Fair Sister of the seraphim !)
> By all of Him we have in thee ;
> Leave nothing of myself in me.
> Let me so read thy life, that I
> Unto all life of mine may die.

It has all the ardour and brave-soaring transport of the highest lyrical inspiration.

COLERIDGE

COLERIDGE is (with the exception of Pope) perhaps the only poet who was a genius to his schoolfellows—and, more wonderful still, to his schoolmaster. At Christ's Hospital his Greek and philosophy were things sensational to all. How he afterwards left Cambridge and enlisted, how he made an indifferent trooper and was bought out, how he came in contact with Southey and later with Wordsworth; of the Pantisocratic scheme and its failure; of the *Lyrical Ballads* and their failure, Macaulay's schoolboy would think it trite to speak. Those were the golden days of the *Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel;* the days when even women like Dorothy Wordsworth sat entranced while the young man eloquent poured out talk the report of which is immortal.

Of that Coleridge one could wish a Sargent or Watts to have left us a portrait, to settle, for one thing, whether his eyes were brown, as some observers say, or grey, as others declare—though it is by a curious error that even De Quincey attaches to him the famous line of Wordsworth about the 'noticeable man with large grey eyes.'* Then came ill-health and opium. Laudanum by the wine-glassful and half-pint at a time soon reduced him to the jour-

* As De Quincey himself shows elsewhere, the passage in question refers probably to Sir Humphry Davy—certainly not to Coleridge.

nalist lecturer and philosopher who projected all things, executed nothing ; only the eloquent tongue left. So he perished—the mightiest intellect of his day ; and great was the fall thereof. There remain of him his poems, and a quantity of letters painful to read. They show him wordy, full of weak lamentation, deplorably strengthless.

No other poet, perhaps, except Spenser, has been an initial influence, a generative influence, on so many poets. Having with that mild Elizabethan much affinity, it is natural that he also should be ' a poets' poet ' in the rarer sense—the sense of fecundating other poets. As with Spenser, it is not that other poets have made him their model, have reproduced essentials of his style (accidents no great poet will consciously perpetuate). The progeny are sufficiently unlike the parent. It is that he has incited the very sprouting in them of the laurel-bough, has been to them a fostering sun of song. Such a primary influence he was to Rossetti—Rossetti, whose model was far more Keats than Coleridge. Such he was to Coventry Patmore, in whose work one might trace many masters rather than Coleridge. ' I did not try to imitate his style,' said that great singer. ' I can hardly explain *how* he influenced me : he was rather an ideal of perfect style than a model to imitate ; but in some indescribable way he did influence my development more than any other poet.'

No poet, indeed, has been senseless enough to imitate the inimitable. One might as well try to paint air as to catch a style so void of all manner that it is visible, like air, only in its results. All other poets have not only a style, but a manner; not only style, but features of style. The style of Coleridge is bare of manner, without feature, not 'distinguishable in member, joint, and limb'; it is, in the Roman sense of *merum*, mere style; style unalloyed and integral. Imitation has no foothold; it would tread on glass. Therefore poets, diverse beyond other men in their appreciation of poets, have agreed with a single mind in their estimate of this poet; no artist could refrain his homage to the miracle of such utterance. To the critic has been left the peculiar and purblind shame of finding eccentricity in this speech unflawed. It seems beyond belief; yet we could point to an edition of Coleridge, published during his lifetime, and preceded by a would-be friendly memoir, which justifies our saying, 'Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.' The admiring critic complains of Mr Coleridge's affectations and wilful fantasticalness of style; and he dares to cite as example that wonderfully perfect union of language and metre:

> The night is chill, the forest bare;
> Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
> There is not wind enough in the air

To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Critics wrapped in ' cocksureness '—to warn, not to discourage you, poets branded with affectation—to give you heart, not recklessness, we recall the fact that this lovely passage was once thought affected and fantastic. There is not one great poet who has escaped the charge of obscurity, fantasticalness, or affectation of utterance. It was hurled, at the outset of their careers, against Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning. Wordsworth wrote simple diction, and his simplicity was termed affected ; Shelley gorgeous diction, and his gorgeousness was affected ; Keats rich diction, and his richness was affected ; Tennyson cunning diction, and his cunning was affected ; Browning rugged diction, and his ruggedness was affected. Why Coleridge was called affected passes the wit of man, except it be that he did not write like Pope or the elegant Mr Rogers—or, indeed, that all critical tradition would be outraged if a mere recent poet were not labelled with the epithet made and provided for him by wise critical precedent. If this old shoe were not thrown at the

wedding of every poet with the Muse, what would become of our ancient English customs ?

But critic and poet, lion and lamb, have now lain down together in their judgement of Coleridge ; and abundance of the most excellent appreciation has left no new word about him possible. The critic, it is to be supposed, feels much the same delicacy in praising a live poet as in eulogizing a man to his face : when the poet goes out of the room, so to speak, and the door of the tomb closes behind him, the too sensitive critic breathes freely, and finds vent for his suppressed admiration. For at least thirty years criticism has unburdened its suppressed feelings about Coleridge, which it considerately spared him while he was alive ; and his position is clear, unquestioned ; his reputation beyond the power of wax or wane. Alone of modern poets, his fame sits above the power of fluctuation. Wordsworth has fluctuated ; Tennyson stands not exactly as he did ; there is reaction in some quarters against the worship of Shelley ; though all are agreed Keats is a great poet, not all are agreed as to his place. But around Coleridge the clamour of partisans is silent : none attacks, none has need to defend. *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, *Genevieve*, are recognized as perfectly unique masterpieces of triumphant utterance and triumphant imagination of a certain kind. They bring down magic to the earth. Shelley has followed it to the skies ; but not all can

companion him in that rarefied ether, and breathe. Coleridge brings it in to us, floods us round with it, makes it native and apprehensible as the air of our own earth. To do so he seeks no remote splendours of language, uses no brazier of fuming imagery. He waves his wand, and the miracle is accomplished before our eyes in the open light of day ; he takes words which have had the life used out of them by the common cry of poets, puts them into relation, and they rise up like his own dead mariners, wonderful with a supernatural animation.

The poems take the reason prisoner, and the spell is renewed as often as they are read. The only question on which critics differ is the respective places of the two longer poems. *The Ancient Mariner* has the advantage of completion, and its necromancy is performed, so to speak, more in the sight of the reader, with a more absolutely simple diction, and a simpler metre. The apparatus—if we may use such a degrading image—is less. *Christabel* is not only a fragment, but incapable of being anything else. Not even Coleridge, we do believe, could have maintained through the intricacies of plot and in *dénouement* the expectations aroused by the opening. The second part, as has been said, declines its level in portions. Yet, in opposition to the general opinion, we think that a more subtle magic is effected in the first part than in *The Ancient Mariner*—marvellous though that be. *The Ancient*

Mariner passes in a region of the supernatural; *Christabel* brings the supernatural into the regions of everyday. Nor can we see, as some critics have seen, any flaw in the success with which this is done. Yet, perhaps, there are a few—chiefly poetic—readers to whom the most unique and enthralling achievement of all is *Kubla Khan*. The words, the music—one and indivisible—come through the gates of dream as never has poem come before or since. This, we believe, might have been completed, so far as a dream is ever completed; that is to say, there might have been more of it. Obviously, the thing has no plot, difficult sustainedly to execute. It is pure lyrism; and the tapestry of shifting vision might unroll indefinitely to the point at which the dream melted. For, unlike many, we have no difficulty in believing Coleridge's account of how the poem arose. We should feel it difficult to believe any other origin. We could no more see a shower without postulating a cloud than we could doubt this poem to have been rained out of dream. If there were a day of judgement against the preventers of poetry, heavy would be the account of that unnamed visitor who interrupted Coleridge in the transcription of his dream-music, and lost to the world for ever the remainder of *Kubla Khan*. In the other world, we trust, this wretched individual will be condemned eternally to go out of ear-shot when the angels prelude on

their harps ; together with all those who by choice enter concert-rooms during the divinest passage of a symphony.

The minor poems of this great poet are minor indeed. *Youth and Age*, *Frost at Midnight*, passages of *The Nightingale* and one or two more which might be named, in spite of a real measure of quiet beauty, could never support a great reputation. The *Ode to Dejection* has unquestionably fine passages, but hardly aims at sustained power. The Odes *To France* and *The Departing Year* are terrible bombast, though here again occur fine lines. The fingers of one hand number the poems on which Coleridge's fame is adamantinely based ; and they were all written in about two years of his youth.

A portrait shows the Coleridge of those younger days, with the poet not yet burned out in him ; when we are told his face had beauty in the eyes of many women. But it is of the later Coleridge that we possess the most luminous descriptions. A slack, shambling man, flabby in face and form and character, redeemed by noble brow and dim yet luminous eyes ; womanly and unstayed of nature, torrentuous of golden talk, the poet submerged and feebly struggling in opium-darkened oceans of German philosophy, amid which he finally foundered, striving to the last to fish up gigantic projects from the bottom of a daily half-pint of laudanum. And over that wreck

most piteous and terrible in all our literary history, shines, and will shine for ever, the five-pointed star of his glorious youth; those poor five resplendent poems, for which he paid the devil's price of a desolated life and unthinkably blasted powers. Other poets may have done greater things; none a thing more perfect and uncompanioned. Other poets belong to this class or that; he to the class of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

BACON

FIRST and before all things, Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, was a great philosopher. In saying this we make no pretension to estimate the value of his philosophy, regarded as an exposition of truth. But it is the acknowledged fact that he is the founder, the *fons et origo*, of that utilitarian school of philosophy which is peculiarly English. We do not say that without him we should have had no Scottish school of philosophy ; no Hume, no Bain, no Reid ; that without him we should have had no Locke, no John Stuart Mill, no Herbert Spencer—who, though very different from the utilitarian school, is nevertheless essentially English, and could not have arisen without the various English philosophers (whether strictly English or Scottish) who had preceded him. That school was in the air, and was bound to come. It is perhaps only in the case of a Shakespeare that we can say a whole literature—nay, almost a whole nation—would have been different if he had not appeared. But as things have been arranged, the whole temper of the British school of philosophy looks back to Bacon as its starting-point.

Far more, in our opinion, must it be said that the whole of English physical science must acknowledge Bacon as its very Adam and progenitor. Not because Bacon was himself a great

physical investigator; but because he first pointed out the aims and the temper of the physical investigator. Cowley stated the truth, with the usual perspicacity of the poet. Bacon did not enter the Promised Land, but he had the vision of it, and pointed the way to it. His whole aim was to start a new philosophical school, which should antithesize the philosophy of the scholastics and the ancients by proceeding from without inwards, instead of from within outwards; from phenomena to essence, not from essence to phenomena. Physical investigation was but a branch of this new departure, as he conceived it. Yet, in laying down this principle, he unwittingly became the patriarch of our modern scientists. Huxley was bred from his loins, and men greater in physical science than Huxley. This, we unhesitatingly aver, seems to us a greater achievement than the authorship of the British school of philosophy. Already there is a reaction towards the recognition of that very scholastic school which Bacon, the philosopher, lived only to destroy and bring into contempt. But there is not, nor ever will be, any reaction from the temper of physical research which he first inculcated. Other views may arise as to the value of the principle he laid down in regard to philosophy. There can be no other view as to the value of the principle he laid down in regard to physical science.

Here, however, we are not concerned with

him on these grounds. We are concerned with him solely as one of the explorers in English prose. And here his name is not so great. He wrote many things, including the not very successful attempt to follow the path of Plato and Sir Thomas More, in the *New Atlantis*. But he survives chiefly by his Essays. They mainly show Bacon the chancellor, the courtier, and man of the world. They are full of very shrewd wisdom, of a devious and not over-principled kind. No attempt is there in them at deep truths, such as you might expect from a philosopher. Not truth, but expediency; the truth of self-interest and worldly consideration is their aim. They show Bacon as an opportunist of the first water, a respectable British Machiavel. If to be a sage in the art of 'getting on' constitutes greatness, then, and not otherwise, they are great. As regards their style, they are doubtless what he would himself call very pithy, pregnant, and sententious. The sentences are short, clear, well-knit, unsuperfluous. But there is no attempt at the more complex evolutions of style; and the succession of short barks (so to speak) is apt to get as tiresome as the utterances of a dog, though he barked like the hoariest sage in kenneldom. There is one exception; and that (if we remember rightly) is the first essay in the collection. But though the earliest (or almost the earliest, if our memory should deceive us) in the book, it is stated by editors to be the latest

written. We can well believe it. For here Bacon ascends to an altogether higher level in subject-matter; and naturally, therefore, to an altogether higher level in style. In the sustained dignity of its sentences, as in the sustained dignity of its thought, it is altogether worthy of Sir Thomas Browne, and might not unhappily be taken for the work of that later and greater master of prose.

Otherwise, even as regards the terseness and weight of wisdom in individual sentences (the excellence in which Bacon excels), the palm must be given to his philosophical works, in spite of their alien language. For example:

> Present justice is in your power; for that which is to come you have no security.

Or again:

> Men believe that their reason governs words. But it is also true that words, like the arrows from a Tartar bow, are shot back, and react on the mind.

And yet again (though it is a precept which has its exceptions, in the case of intuitional minds):

> Let every student of Nature take this as a fact, that whatever the mind seizes and dwells on with peculiar satisfaction is to be held in suspicion.

Consider also this most practical maxim:

> In attempts to improve your character, know what is in your power and what beyond it.

Or finally, the saying in the *De Amicitia*,

which we quote in the original language on account of its superior terseness :

Magna civitas, magna solitudo.

It might be a saying from Seneca or St Augustine, so pregnant and sparse in wording is it. And if we have somewhat deprecated the excessive praise usually given to Bacon as a writer of prose, let it be acknowledged that, compared with the average modern writer, he is fine and full of matter indeed. It is only by comparison with the great writers of the seventeenth century that he appears less a master of his art. But then, he preceded them ; and perhaps even Sir Thomas Browne learned something from him.

MILTON

THE most apocalyptic of English poets was appropriately a 'John'; more inappropriately, one of the richest of all poets was a Puritan. The facts of his life are common history. He is almost the sole great poet we recollect who was a strict Londoner; being born in that city, of a scrivener, on December 9, 1608. He was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge—the beauty of the reserved and haughty student procuring him the name of 'the lady of Christ's.' All things considered, he was one of the most truly precocious of English poets; for in his twenty-first year he wrote the *Hymn on the Nativity*—in spite of some too ingenious and 'conceited' stanzas, as grand a lyric as was ever penned. Perhaps Rossetti, with his *Blessed Damozel* at nineteen, is the nearest parallel; for a fine stanza or two at an early age cannot be paralleled with this sustainedly consummate achievement. In 1637 was published the *Comus*, and in the same year the *Lycidas*, which from its subject should seem to belong to his college years. These, with *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and the *Arcades* marked him in his youth for one of the most perfect lyrical geniuses ever born.

How, after a tour in Italy, where he won golden opinions from the Italian *literati*, he thenceforward devoted himself to the defence,

in prose, of the Puritan cause, holding a position as Latin Secretary to the Council of State, is well known ; nor was it until the Restoration that he gave himself again wholly to poetry. Twenty-four years of prose drudgery, immortalized only through a genius which turned to gold whatever it touched, is a record of self-command not matched in the history of poets, or matched only partially by Goethe. In 1658, when the Latin Secretaryship was divided with Marvell, he began *Paradise Lost.* It is the custom to think of this as a work carried on steadily at intervals throughout the bulk of Milton's later life ; but, as a mater of fact, it was the work of seven years—a brief enough time for the magnitude of the task. Published in 1665, it met with an instant success. Thirteen hundred copies were sold in two years. Practically, his contemporaries—let it be recorded to their credit—pronounced the verdict of posterity. Six years later he closed his record with *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes.* In 1674 he died ; having been blind for the last twenty-two years of his life.

Of his three wives, and his relations with them, enough has been written. It was a hard thing to be Milton's wife or Milton's daughter. He was stern, he was austere, he was self-centred ; his impeccable strength was purchased by a sublime and monotonous egoism—which is the name they give to selfishness in poets. Very chill must have been the life of his girls

in that Puritan house, reading to the inwrapped Puritan father from languages they did not understand, and taking down from his lips poetry they understood still less. Milton found them undutiful. Poor little 'undutiful' daughters! Fathers had terrible conceptions of duty in those days. Did anyone ever want to know Milton? Did anyone ever not want to know Shakespeare? Doubtless there are readers of the Exeter Hall class who would have yearned for the godly company of the 'great Christian poet.' But, on the whole, how thankful one should be that Shakespeare was not a 'Christian poet'! 'Les vrais artistes sont toujours un peu païens,' said poor Stephen Heller to Sir Charles Hallé; in no invidious sense, for was he not a Catholic writing to a Catholic?

But, in truth, this Sunday-school tradition apart, Milton was more than 'un peu païen.' An extraordinary *mélange* of Hebrew and heathen, this Milton—something of Job, something of Æschylus, not a little of Plato, with an infusion of the Ancient Fathers to 'make the gruel thick and slab.' That 'Dorique delicacy' which ravished Sir Henry Wotton in the lyrics of *Comus* was indeed a gift from the Greeks; yet even in *Il Penseroso* one comes across a fragment from St Athanasius. All learning was fuel to this fire; and what fire it was that could fuse all learning into such poetry! A like burthen of knowledge clogged even Goethe; but, with occasional exceptions, Milton moves

under it freely as in festal garlands. As he borrowed from all learning, so he took from all poets. In particular, to an extent not fully realized, the style of *Comus* is based on Shakespeare. In structure, *Comus* is obviously indebted to Fletcher and the Elizabethan masque-writers. But its diction and the very music of its blank verse follow Shakespeare with a superb and unique felicity, which excludes no jot of Milton's own genius. Shakespeare's magic here, at least, is copied. Such a passage as this has the very ring of Shakespeare's softer style in versification :

> Some say, no evil thing that walks by night,
> In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
> Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
> That breaks his magic chains at curfew-time ;
> No goblin, or swart faery of the mine,
> Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.

Compare Titania's speech :

> Never, since the middle summer's spring,
> Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,
> By pavèd fountain or by rushy brook,
> Or on the beachèd margent of the sea,
> To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
> But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.

And one expression, ' the porch and inlet of each sense,' is suggested by ' the porches of my sear ' in Hamlet. But not in Shakespeare's

self is there such a distillation of sheer beauty, combined with perfect form and stately philosophy, as in this wonderful masque. With the monumental *Lycidas* and the other minor poems, it makes an achievement which Milton has not surpassed in kind. The ' bowery loneliness ' of *Paradise Lost* is less lovelily beautiful. The special greatness of that epic is, first and last, sublimity—unmatched outside the Scriptures. It widened the known bounds of the sublime. De Quincey has described how, in his opium-dreams, the sense of space was portentously enlarged. Such a tyrannous extension of the spatial sense presides over *Paradise Lost.* But the source of sublimity is not in mere vastness. Henry Vaughan has at once expounded and exemplified it in two lines :

> There is in God, some say,
> A deep, but dazzling, darkness.

That is not only sublime—it is sublimity. Mystery impelling awe is the fountain of this quality. Accordingly, Milton's imagery is not simply spacious, but undefined. The immediate suggestion of the image we grasp ; but the associations stirred by it ascend and descend through interminable reverberations.

Mr Coventry Patmore considered Milton even a greater thaumaturge in words than Shakespeare. It is disputable ; but to those who, like Mr Patmore, lean rather towards the classic

and Greek than towards the romantic and Gothic school, it may be conceded that Milton is unapproached for his union of Gothic richness with the sculpturesqueness of classic form. Mr Patmore, who was himself a reconciler of yet more impossible opposites, might well incline a little to Milton. It is impossible to question another opinion of his, that the three chief fountains of wonderful diction are Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. 'What a mine he is of words!' he once exclaimed, regarding Spenser; and Milton himself 'mined for words' in both his predecessors, most of all, we think, in Spenser.

Mr Patmore remarks truly that from Spenser Milton derived even some of the metres thought to be peculiarly his own—for example, the metre of *Lycidas*. To a minor extent he used more primitive sources, as in 'the swinked hedger' of *Comus*. As with all great poets, no soil came amiss to him in prospecting for diction; in spite of his ruling tendency towards the exotic, the polysyllabic, the grandiose, he could use 'homespun Saxon' with an enchantment not surpassed by Shakespeare. This needs the more insistence, because his contributions to (as apart from what he drew out of) the treasury of English are notoriously latinized and stately. The successful, the wonderful latinisms of Shakespeare have been grossly overlooked. 'All the abhorrèd births below crisp heaven'; 'The replication of your

sounds made in his concave shores'; 'The intertissued robe of gold and pearl'; 'Not all these, laid in bed majestical'; here is but a random handful of the supreme latinities, some become current, others unimitated in poetry, which are first found in Shakespeare. But it is Milton who has been the great lapidary of Latin splendours in the English tongue; solemnities of diction, indeed, so exotic that for the most part they remain among the unprofaned insignia of poetry when she goes forth in state; words never journalized by the 'base mechanical hand' of prose. In *Comus* alone can we justly compare him with his great dramatic predecessor, and there we find this essential contrast in the matter of diction; the words of Shakespeare seem to flower from the line, while the Miltonic line is inlaid with rich and chosen words. The distinction may seem —but we think is not—fanciful.

Of his blank verse two men alone could have written with full perception; both have left but slight and casual utterances. One was De Quincey, the other Coventry Patmore. Were the critic fool enough to rush in where the most gifted have feared to tread, not in a journalistic summary could he analyse its colossal harmonies. *Paradise Lost* is the treasury and supreme display of metrical counterpoint. It is to metre what the choruses of Handel are to music.

A poet (to conclude, where we have ventured

little more than a prelude) for sheer accomplishment not equalled in our language; in youth capable of luxuriant beauty, in age of 'severe magnificence,' yet in youth or age without humaneness or heart-blood in his greatness; of overawing sublimity, yet not ethereal; of concrete solidity, yet not earthly; a poet to whom all must bow the knee, few or none the heart; 'the second name of men' in English song, who had gone near to being the first, if his grandeurs, his majesties, his splendours, his august solemnities, had been humid with a tear or a smile. The most inspired artificer in poetry, he lacked, perhaps (or was it a perfecting fault?), a little poetic poverty of soul, a little detachment from his artistic riches. He could not forget, nor can we forget, that he was Milton. And, after all, one must confess it was worth remembering. An art so conscious and consummate was never before joined with such plenitude of the spirit.

POPE

THERE was born in eighteenth century England a pale little diseased wretch of a boy. Since it was evident that he would never be fit for any healthy and vigorous trade, and that he must all his life be sickly and burdensome to himself, and since it is the usual way of such unhappy beings to add to their unhappiness by their own perversities of choice, he naturally became a poet. And after living for long in a certain miserable state called glory, reviled and worshipped and laughed at and courted, despised by the women he loved, very ill looked after, amid the fear and malignity of many and the affection of very few, the wizened little suffering monstrosity died, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, by way of encouraging others to follow in his footsteps. And though a large number of others have done so with due and proper misfortune, in all the melancholy line there is, perhaps, no such destined a wretch as Alexander Pope. What fame can do to still the cravings of such a poor prodigal of song, in the beggarly raiment of his tattered body, that it did for him. The husks of renown he had in plenty, and had them all his life, as no other poet has had. But Voltaire testified that the author of that famous piece of philosophy, 'Whatever is, is right,' was the most miserable man he had ever known.

This king of the eighteenth century is still

the king of the eighteenth century by general consent. Dryden was a greater poet, *meo judicio*, but he did not represent the eighteenth century so well as Pope. All that was elegant and airy in the polished artificiality of that age reaches its apotheosis in the *Rape of the Lock*. It is Pope's masterpiece, a Watteau in verse. The poetry of manners could no further go than in this boudoir epic, unmatched in any literature. It is useless, I may here say, to renew the old dispute whether Pope was a poet. Call his verse poetry or what you will, it is work in verse which could not have been done in prose, and, of its kind, never equalled. Then the sylph machinery in the *Rape of the Lock* is undoubted work of fancy: the fairyland of powder and patches, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seen through chocolate-fumes. The *Essay on Man* is naught to us nowadays, as a whole. It has brilliant artificial passages. It has homely aphorisms such as only Pope and Shakespeare could produce—the quintessence of pointed common sense: many of them have passed into the language, and are put down, by three out of five who quote them, to Shakespeare. But, as a piece of reasoning in verse, the *Essay on Man* is utterly inferior to Dryden's *Hind and Panther*. Even that brilliant achievement could not escape the doom which hangs over the didactic poem pure and simple; and certain, therefore, was the fate of the *Essay on Man*.

The *Dunciad* De Quincey ranked even above the *Rape of the Lock*. At my peril I venture to question a judgement backed by all the ages. The superb satire of parts of the poem I admit ; I admit the exceedingly fine close, in which Pope touched a height he never touched before or after ; I admit the completeness of the scheme. But from that completeness comes the essential defect of the poem. He adapted the scheme from Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*. But Dryden's satire is at once complete and succinct : Pope has built upon the scheme an edifice greater than it will bear ; has extended a witty and ingenious idea to a portentous extent at which it ceases to be amusing. The mock solemnity of Dryden's idea becomes a very real and dull solemnity when it is extended to liberal epic proportions. A serious epic is apt to nod, with the force of a Milton behind it ; an epic satire fairly goes to sleep. A pleasantry in several books is past a pleasantry. And it is bolstered out with a great deal which is sheer greasy scurrility. The mock-heroic games of the poets are in large part as dully dirty as the waters into which Pope makes them plunge.

If the poem had been half as long, it might have been a masterpiece. As it is, unless we are to reckon masterpieces by avoirdupois weight, or to assign undue value to mere symmetry of scheme, I think we must look for Pope's satirical masterpiece elsewhere. Not in the satire on women, where Pope seems hardly to

have his heart in his work; but in the imitations from Horace, those generally known as Pope's *Satires*. Here he is at his very best and tersest. They are as brilliant as anything in the *Dunciad*, and they are brilliant right through; the mordant pen never flags. It matters not that they are imitated from Horace. They gain by it: their limits are circumscribed, their lines laid down, and Pope writes the better for having these limits set him, this tissue on which to work. Not a whit does he lose in essential originality: nowhere is he so much himself. It is very different from Horace, say the critics. Surely that is exactly the thing for which to thank poetry and praise Pope. It has not the pleasant urbane good humour of the Horatian spirit. No, it has the spirit of Pope—and satire is the gainer. Horace is the more charming companion; Pope is the greater satirist. In place of an echo of Horace (and no verse translation was ever anything but feeble which attempted merely to echo the original), we have a new spirit in satire; a fine series of English satirical poems, which in their kind are unapproached by the Roman, and in his kind wisely avoid the attempt to approach him. *Satires after Horace* would have been a better title than *Imitations;* for less imitative poems in essence were never written. These and the *Rape of the Lock* are Pope's finest title to fame. The *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady* has at least one part which

shows a pathos little to have been surmised from his later work; and so, perhaps (in a much less degree, I think), have fragments of the once famous *Eloisa to Abelard*. But the *Pastorals*, and the *Windsor Forest*, and the *Ode on St Cecilia's Day*, and other things in which Pope tried the serious or natural vein, are only fit to be remembered with Macpherson's Ossian and the classical enormities of the French painter David.

On the whole, it is as a satirist we must think of him, and the second greatest in the language. The gods are in pairs, male and female; and if Dryden was the Mars of English satire, Pope was the Venus—a very eighteenth century Venus, quite as conspicuous for malice as for elegance. If a woman's satire were informed with genius, and cultivated to the utmost perfection of form by lifelong and exclusive literary practice, one imagines it would be much like Pope's. His style seems to me feminine in what it lacks; the absence of any geniality, any softening humour to abate its mortal thrust. It is feminine in what it has, the malice, the cruel dexterity, the delicate needle point which hardly betrays its light and swift entry, yet stings like a bee. Even in his coarseness—as in the *Dunciad*—Pope appears to me female. It is the coarseness of the fine ladies of that material time, the Lady Maries and the rest of them. Dryden is a rough and thick-natured man, cudgelling his adversaries with coarse

speech in the heat and brawl and the bluntness of his sensibilities ; a country squire, who is apt at times to use the heavy end of his cutting whip ; but when Pope is coarse he is coarse with effort, he goes out of his way to be nasty, in the evident endeavour to imitate a man. It is a girl airing the slang of her schoolboy brother.

The one thing, perhaps, which differentiates him from a woman, and makes it possible to read his verse with a certain pleasure, without that sense of unrelieved cruelty which repels one in much female satire, is his artist's delight in the exercise of his power. You feel that, if there be malice, intent to wound, even spite, yet none of these count for so much with him as the exercise of his superb dexterity in fence. He is like Ortheris fondly patting his rifle after that long shot which knocked over the deserter, in Mr Kipling's story. After all, you reflect, it is fair fight ; if his hand was against many men, many men's hands were against him. So you give yourself up to admire the shell-like epigram, the rocketing and dazzling antithesis, the exquisitely deft play of point, by which the little invalid kept in terror his encompassing cloud of enemies—many of them adroit and formidable wits themselves. And you think, also, that the man who was loved by Swift, the professional hater, was not a man without a heart ; though he wrote the most finished and brilliant satire in the language.

JAMES THOMSON

WHAT are the chances of the poet as against the practical man—the politician, for instance—in the game of Fame? The politician sees his name daily in the papers, until even he is a little weary of seeing it there. The poet's name appears so rarely that the sight of it has a certain thrill for its owner. But time is all on the side of the poet. The politician's name is barely given a decent burial; it makes haste to its oblivion. Where be the Chancellors of the Exchequer of yester year? The poet, on the contrary, about whom in his life people speak shyly, has his name shouted from the housetop as soon as he is out of earshot. So great, indeed, is the gratitude of reading beings, that a very little poet, such as the author of *The Seasons*, is familiarly known by name to the English-speaking race nearly two centuries after his birth; and now (1897) a new edition of his works has been issued with a memoir that does not spare a detail, and with notes—'critical appendices' they are called—that indicate a laboured study of Thomson's text, on the part of so learned an editor as Mr D. C. Tovey.

Yet Thomson, all the time, is a poet only by courtesy—you could not find in all his formal numbers one spark of the divine fire. Pope may have helped Thomson with *The Seasons*, as Mr Tovey thinks Warton right in

saying ; but between Pope and Thomson there is a vast dividing space of technical accomplishment. Between Thomson and Wordsworth or any other of the poetical poets, there is more than space, there is an impassable gulf. Yet Mr Tovey says ' we can trace his influence, we think, in Keats ; we can trace it also in Coleridge. Again, between Wordsworth and Thomson we naturally seek affinities.' Coleridge no doubt, wrote many unreal and pretentious things about Nature—*The Hymn before Sunrise* we are bold to class among them—and these we can concede—a concession it is—to anybody to bracket with *The Seasons*. The essential Coleridge is the only Coleridge that the world of letters cares to keep ; and there we must say to Thomson's editor, ' Hands off.' Mr Tovey thinks it worth while to suggest also a resemblance of ' essential thought ' between Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn* and Thomson's

> On the marble tomb
> The well-dissembled mourner stooping stands
> For ever silent and for ever sad.

The ' essence ' of the thing does not lie in the thought at all—the old and obvious thought of the permanent expression of emotion in sculpture. It is a matter of treatment ; and Mr Tovey himself does not fail to distinguish the essential difference there. As for Wordsworth (who, by the way, preferred *The Castle of Indolence*

to *The Seasons*, a preference we share), the association of Thomson's name with his has become a commonplace, and, like most commonplaces, it stands to be revised. Thomson is the link, we are constantly assured, between Milton and Wordsworth, as an observer and an interpreter of Nature. A little feeling of heart-freshness in the Spring we may, by searching, find in him—not so much in *The Seasons* as in *A Hymn*, where the phrase, 'wide flush the fields,' and the line :

> And every sense and every heart is joy,

just seem to be a degree less distant and conventional than was usual with the eighteenth century Muse. But here, again, the thought is of ancient days ; it is the presentment that is the essence ; and three of the Spring lines in the *Intimations of Immortality* are worth many times more than all the six thousand or so lines of *The Seasons*, however indefinitely multiplied. The difference is, in truth, of kind and not of degree ; and these comparisons between things which have no relativity make us feel like 'young Celadon and his Amelia,' when they 'looked unutterable things'—the only phrase by which Thomson is likely to be spontaneously remembered.

We do not forget that the Thomson-Wordsworth superstition had an illustrious origin—it began in Wordsworth's own saying

that 'from Milton to Thomson no poet had added to English literature a new image drawn from Nature.' That is one of the generous *obiter dicta* great poets have made from time to time for the bewilderment of the unwary. Dr Johnson, it is true, took Thomson seriously, or wrote as though he did; but we remember that when he read *The Seasons* aloud to his friend Shiels, and extorted the listener's praise, he added, 'Well, sir, I have omitted every other line.' He was angry, for all that, when Lyttelton, after the poet's death, abbreviated his poem on Liberty before publishing it—such mutilations, Dr Johnson said, tended 'to destroy the confidence of society and to confound the characters of authors!' Horace Walpole uttered his contempt for Thomson straight out; but Boswell was politic, as became him; and his own personal judgement is, no doubt, shrewdly pitted against Johnson's more favourable opinion in the phrase: 'His *Seasons* are indeed full of elegant and pious sentiments; but a rank soil, nay, a dunghill, will produce beautiful flowers.'

For and against Thomson, in seasons and out, the vain tale of opinions would take too long in the telling. But Cowper it was who said that Thomson's 'lasting fame' proved him a 'true poet.' He would be a yet truer poet to-day, on that reasoning, for his 'fame' is still lasting. His *Rule, Britannia* has a place in anthologies even now; he is the bard in popular possession

of the name he bears (a name that Praed hated), although stories are told of confusion in circulating libraries and book shops between the poet of *The Seasons* and the poet of *The City of Dreadful Night*—that later James Thomson who, conscious of the identity of his name with his predecessor's, added stanzas to the *Castle of Indolence*. The secret of this sustained name—we distinguish name from fame—is easily guessed. The common mention of Milton and Wordsworth in Thomson's company supports his superfluous immortality. Poet or no poet, he is mixed up with poets, and is a part of poetical history.

And the added irony of this careful preservation of a name that stands for little or nothing is this—that whereas Thomson's naturalism was, in his own time, sufficiently marked to set his reputation going, we, with all the great poets of Nature between him and us, read him now, if we read him at all, for the very opposite quality—for artificiality. We tolerate him for his last-centuryness. We have a certain curiosity in observing an observation of Nature which was rewarded no more intimately than by a knowledge of the time-sequence of snowdrop, crocus, primrose, and 'violet darkly blue.' We like to hear him speak of young birds as 'the feathered youth'; of his women readers as 'the British fair'; of Sir Thomas More as having withstood 'the brutal tyrant's useful rage.' Such phrases speak to us from another

world than ours, from a world which had taste that was not touched with emotion; from a world, in short, which lacked the one thing needful for poetical life—inspiration.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

THE life of Thomas De Quincey is too well known to need much recounting. It is, indeed, the one thing that most people do know of him, even when they have not read his works. Born at Greenhays in the Manchester neighbourhood; brought up by a widowed mother with little in her of motherhood; shy, small, sensitive, dwelling in corners, with a passion for shunning notice, for books and the reveries stimulated by books; without the boy's love of games and external activities; the only break in his dreamy existence was the sometime companionship of a school-boy elder brother. That episode in his childhood he has told a little long-windedly, as is the De Quincey fashion; and with curious out-of-the-way humour, as is also the De Quincey fashion. He has told of the imaginary kingdoms ruled by his brother and himself; and how the brother, assuming suzerainty over De Quincey's realm, was continually issuing proclamations which burdened the younger child's heart. Once, for example, the elder brother, having become a convert to the Monboddo doctrine in regard to Primitive Man, announced that the inhabitants of De Quincey's kingdom were still in a state of tail; and ordained that they should sit down, by edict, a certain number of hours *per diem*, to work off their ancestral appendages. Also has Thomas told of the mill-youths with

whom his brother waged constant battle, impressing the little boy as an auxiliary ; and how De Quincey, being captured by the adversary, was saved by the womankind of the hostile race, who did, furthermore, kiss him all round ; and how, thereupon, his brother issued a bulletin, or order of the day, censuring him in terrible language for submitting to the kisses of the enemy.

The *Confessions* contain the story of De Quincey's youth : his precocity as a Greek scholar, which led one master to remark of him : 'There is a boy who could harangue an Athenian mob better than you or I an English one' ; his misery at and flight from school, his subsequent drifting to London, his privations in 'stony-hearted' Oxford Street, which he paced at night with the outcast Ann ; and there laid the seeds of the digestive disorder which afterwards drove him to opium. His experiences as an opium-eater have become, through his *Confessions*, one of the best-known chapters in English literary history. The habit, shaken off once, returned on him, never again entirely to be mastered. But he did, after severest struggle, ultimately reduce it within a limited compass, which left free his power of work ; and, unlike Coleridge, passed the closing years of his life in reasonable comfort and freedom from anxiety. The contrast was deserved. For the shy little creature displayed in his contest with the obsessing demon of his life a patient

tenacity and purpose to which justice has hardly been done. With half as much 'grit,' Coleridge might have left us a less piteously wasted record. In the midst of this life-and-death struggle, De Quincey worked for his journalistic bread with an industry the results of which are represented in sixteen volumes of prose, while further gleanings have, in these late years, intermittently made their appearance. It is not a record which supports the charge of sluggishness or wasted life. Never, at any period, has it been easy for a man to support his family solely by articles for reviews and magazines. Yet De Quincey did it honourably; and if he was often in straits, it is doubtful whether this should not be set to the account of his financial incompetence.

His life brought him into contact with most of the great *littérateurs* of his time. 'Christopher North' was his only bosom friend; but in his youth he was an intimate of all the 'Lake' circle; and, finally, he who had known Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, Landor, Hazlitt, and at least had glimpse of Shelley, lived to be acquainted with later men like Prof. Masson and others. Not all thought well of him: his talk, like his books, could fret as well as charm; and probably the charge of a certain spitefulness was earned. But, like feminine spite, it could be, and was, co-existent with a kind heart, a gentle and even childlike nature. His children loved him; and

though he was a genius, an opium-eater, and married beneath him, he defied all rules by being happy in his marriage.

As a writer, De Quincey has been viewed with the complete partiality dear to the English mind, and hateful to his own. He was nothing if not distinguishing; the Englishman hates distinctions and qualifications. He loved to

> divide
> A hair 'twixt south and south-west side;

the Englishman yearns for his hair one and indivisible. The Englishman says, 'Black's black—*furieusement* black; and white's white—*furieusement* white.' De Quincey saw many blacks, many whites, multitudinous greys. Consequently to one he is a master of prose; to another — and that other Carlyle — 'wire-drawn.' To one he ranks with the Raleighs, the Brownes, the Jeremy Taylors; to another—and that other Mr Henley—he is 'Thomas de Sawdust.' And, as usual, both have a measure of rightness. Too often is De Quincey wire-drawn, diffuse, ostentatious in many words of distinctions which might more summarily be put; tantalizing, exasperating. Also, if you will suffer him with patience, he is never obvious; a challenger of routine views, a perspicuous, if minute and wordy, logician, subtle in balanced appraisal. He was the first to practise that mode of criticism we call 'appreciation'—be it a

merit or not. Often his rhetorical *bravuras* (as he himself called them) are of too insistent, too clamorously artificial, a virtuosity. Also, in a valuable remainder, they are wonderful in vaporous and cloud-lifted imagination, magnificently orchestrated in structure of sentence, superb in range and quality of diction. In a more classified review, he never criticizes without casting some novel light, and often sums up the characteristics of his subject in memorably fresh and inclusive sentences. His sketch biographies, marred by characteristic discursiveness, at their best (as in the Bentley or the Shakespeare) are difficult to supersede, eating to the vitals of what they touch. His historical papers are unsystematic, skimming the subject like a sea-mew, and dipping every now and again to bring to the surface some fresh view on this or that point.

To re-tell the old has no interest for him; it is the point of controversy, the angle at which he catches a new light, that interests him. But his noble views on insulated aspects of history have sometimes been quietly adopted by succeeding writers. Thus his view of the relations between Cæsar and Pompey, and the attitude of Cicero towards both, is substantially that taken in Dean Merivale's *History of the Romans*. On his prose fantasies we have already touched. In a certain shadowy vastness of vision we say deliberately that they have more of the spirit of Milton than anything else

in the language—though, of course, they have no intention of competing with Milton. They are by themselves. The best of the *Confessions ;* that vision of the starry universe which he greatly improved from Richter ; parts (only parts) of *The Mail-Coach* (which is strained as a whole) ; portions of the *Suspiria ;* above all, *The Three Ladies of Sorrow*—these are marvellous examples of a thing which no other writer, unless it be Ruskin, has succeeded in persuading us to be legitimate. Its admirers will always be few ; we have no doubt they will always be enthusiastic.

His humour should have a word to itself. The famous *Murder as One of the Fine Arts* is the only specimen which we need pause upon. Much of that paper is humour out of date ; a little childish and obvious. But of the residue let it be said that it was the first example of the topsy-turvydom which we associate with the name of Gilbert. The passage which describes how murder leads at last to procrastination and incivility—'Many a man has dated his ruin from some murder which he thought little of at the time'—might have come out at a Savoy opera. In this, as in other things, De Quincey was an innovator, and, like other innovators, has been eclipsed by his successors. Yet, with all shortcomings, the paper is likely to leave a more durable residuum than much humour which is now of the highest fashion. It is not certain that the slang on which a vast

deal of new humour is pivoted will any more amuse posterity than the slang on which De Quincey too often and unluckily relied.

A little, wrinkly, high-foreheaded, dress-as-you-please man; a meandering, inhumanly intellectual man, shy as a hermit-crab, and as given to shifting his lodgings; much-enduring, inconceivable of way, sweet-hearted, fine-natured, small-spited, uncanny as a sprite begotten of libraries; something of a bore to many, by reason of talking like a book in coat and breeches—undeniably clever and wonderful talk none the less; master of a great, unequal, seductive, and irritating style; author of sixteen delightful and intolerable volumes, part of which can never die, and much of which can never live: that is De Quincey.

MACAULAY

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY was the son of Zachary Macaulay, an ardent abolitionist, the friend of the famous group which gathered round Wilberforce and Clarkson. Early distinguished by omnivorous reading and the old-fashioned literariness of his speech, he first attempted in letters a couple of fragments which aimed at reproducing the life of dashing young Greek and Roman patricians, having for their heroes such typical ' mashers ' of the antique world as Alcibiades and Cæsar.

It was a characteristic beginning in one whose mental bent was throughout towards resurrecting the life of past ages. Then came that connexion with the *Edinburgh Review* which produced the most valuable work of his life; and made, while it lasted, the glory of the *Edinburgh*. He entered Parliament as member for Edinburgh, which he represented for many years; being thrown out on one occasion, and restored on the next opportunity by the repentant city at its own cost. A successful Parliamentary career was interrupted for a time by his experience as an Indian official, which provided the materials for his essays on Clive and Warren Hastings. From the outset of his career he was a member of the brilliant Holland House circle. He lived to publish a History of England, which was regarded, in its day, as ranking with the work of Hume and Gibbon; and died in the full

enjoyment of a reputation as the most brilliant prose-writer and talker of his time. It is doubtful whether it should be regarded as an addition to or detraction from his good fortune that he remained to the last a bachelor.

It was a varied career; yet brilliantly unromantic, splendidly commonplace, 'out of obvious ways ne'er wandering far.' In this, his life—like all men's lives—was typical of the man, and the genius of the man, which lay essentially in making strikingly obvious the obviously striking. The recluse De Quincey, with an infinitely more circumscribed career, wove into it infinitely more arresting romance. Coleridge, leading the petty life of a hack-writer, 'bound in shallows and in miseries,' yet imposed on that life the poetry of his own character. Keats shed the halo of the younger gods around an existence of small parlours, suburban gardens, and Hampstead Heath. But Macaulay in the purple would have been a crowned *bourgeois;* a-top of Olympus he would have wielded middle-class majesties, and ordered his thunderbolts from Whitworth's; while he would have lightened on the Olympian thrones and principalities in quarterly proclamations, flashing with antitheses, sounding the blessedness of modern Olympian 'progress,' and pointing out how much things had improved since the days when the gods were unbreeched savages, content with a monotonous diet of ambrosia, and drinking doubtful

nectar in place of Madeira. 'We are better clothed, better fed, better civilized';—so would have run the proclamation of Zeus-Macaulay. 'We no longer quarrel like children, drink like tavern-companions, and cut antiquated witticisms at the delicate jest of a limping cup-bearer black from the forge. The thunderbolts of Whitworth are of more skilled manufacture than the thunderbolts of Hephæstus. Poseidon still rules the waves, but he rules them with a better-made trident. He has his carriage from Bond Street, his horses would not disgrace the Row; he is a well-dressed gentleman, instead of a naked barbarian. Aphrodite has not lost the primacy of beauty, because her fashions are more those of Paris, and less those of Central Africa. The good old times were the bad old times: the very kitchens of Olympus bear witness that there has been such a thing as progress, the very toilet-table of Hera testifies to the march of enlightenment.'

He was content to take the goods the gods had provided him; satisfied with himself, his position, and his day. The day returned the compliment, as it always does, by being satisfied with him. 'Thou art a blessed fellow,' it said with Prince Hal, 'to think as every man thinks; never a man's thought in the nation keeps the roadway better than thine.' He was made for great success rather than great achievement. In all he did he was popular—honourably and deservedly popular; in all he did he was content

to pluck something short of the topmost laurels. He was a successful politician, yet never reached the positions attained by men far more stupid; his speeches, immeasurably superior to the parliamentary eloquence of the present day, filled the House, yet he has left no great name as an orator; he was a great talker in an age of great talkers, yet the tradition of his talk has not impressed itself on literary history as did the traditional talk of Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincey, or Sydney Smith. He wrote history brilliantly, and no serious historian accepts his history as serious history. He wrote essays which profoundly influenced literary style—yea, even to the style of the newspaper-leader; yet it is not altogether certain whether they will maintain their place among the classical classics of English prose. His genius was so like prodigious talent that it is possible to doubt whether it was not prodigious talent very like genius. He was 'cocksure of everything,' in Melbourne's famous epigram, but posterity is by no means cocksure of him.

The most permanent part of his literary baggage is undoubtedly the Essays. It is easy to say what they are not, which Mr George Meredith has declared to be the national mode of criticism; a mode of criticism not without its uses when the universality of a man's fame has made fault-finding an unpopular task, but decidedly the cheapest and lowest part of a

critic's duty. What they are not is largely responsible for the reaction against Macaulay. Our day has seen the rise and strengthening of a very subtle school of style, marked by delicate verbal instinct, and extreme attention to the melody of syllables and sentences. It is the day of Stevenson and Mrs Meynell ; a day which is like to underrate Macaulay : for Macaulay is not subtle, is not careful of verbal choiceness. It is a delicate day, in which ' mere rhetoric ' is rather frowned upon ; and Macaulay is brusque, off-hand, revelling in all devices labelled rhetorical : in balance, antithesis, epigram of the cut-and-thrust order. It is fearful of the obvious ; Macaulay loves the obvious with impatient middle-class thoroughness. To take the surface-view, and exaggerate its glaring obviousness until to refuse the accepting of it is almost as difficult as to shut out a lightning flash—that is meat and drink to him. On the other hand, he has qualities as well as defect of qualities ; and the critic should cultivate the habit of regarding a man chiefly for what he is. The man who is always croaking of his friends' shortcomings is not more hateful than the critic to whom a literary sun is only spots set off by inter-spaces of light : for to every true critic the masters of literature should be friends. If he love literature, he should love the makers of literature. The creative artist may be forgiven, or, at least, palliated, if to him literature is largely a vehicle for the display of his own

personality; but the critic is unendurable to whom the monuments of literature are what other monuments are to the British tourist—an opportunity for carving his own name on them.

And Macaulay's qualities are such as we should be specially thankful for in our day. If it is a delicate day, it is also a day given to languor; and Macaulay is always vital with energy—or, as the man in the street would say, 'all there.' It is a day in which there is a penn'orth of refined style to an intolerable deal of uttermost slovenliness; and Macaulay has always a conscience of style. It is a day which shirks the labour of producing unified wholes, which dribbles away in snatches, mumbles and slathers the literary bone in its lazy jaws. Macaulay displays symmetry, proportion, unity, a sense of the balance of parts, in all his essays. Perhaps none of the principal masters of the essay are so exemplarily artistic in this point. De Quincey is apt to be fragmentary, at the best seldom maps out and proportions his work: he overflows on some points, draws in tantalizingly on others, and leaves the reader with a mingled impression of extreme thoroughness and scamped work. Landor is wandering and capricious; Hazlitt is a shower of sparks; Addison is by profession a pleasant meanderer; Stevenson's very method is whim. One might prolong the list. But Macaulay's essay is always built up soundly in the stocks. Deep it does not

go, but proportion it always keeps ; the thing is undeniably a miniature whole. Then, if the stimulant devices are too restlessly stimulant ; if they are sometimes cheap ; if balance, antithesis, point, artful abruptness, are carried to an extent which gives a savour of the accomplished literary showman calling attention to his wares : yet they are undeniably effective, touched in with a deft and rapid hand ; the reader is lifted along unflaggingly.

And it is literature ; if he have nothing new to say, old things are newly said, with surpassing cunning in the presentment. The flow of instances with which an extraordinary memory enables him to support his points may be excessive, may be inexact at times (as the argument by parallel and analogy rarely fails to be, except in the most scrupulous hands), but it lends surprising life and picturesqueness to what with most men would have been dry discussion. For his much-vaunted lucidity we have less praise. He is lucid by taking the obvious road in everything, which is the easy road ; and his arrangement is often the reverse of clear from the logical standpoint. But if he is no starter of original views, if he keeps to the surface of things, he must not be denied the merit of presenting that surface with a painter-like animation. Here is his power ; it is on this that his fame must rest. As a critic he is naught ; as a biographer or historian he is naught so far as exactitude of treatment,

novelty, or philosophy of view is concerned. But he can revivify a period, a person, or a society, with such brilliancy and conciseness as no other Englishman has done.

In one respect alone have we any disposition to quarrel with the routine view of him. We are disposed to put in a good word for his ballads. Mr Henley has truly remarked that *The Last Buccaneer* curiously anticipates some points in the methods of Mr Kipling. And we do, indeed, think that here Macaulay knew exactly what he wanted, and did it. The sayings and doings of the personages in these ballads are obvious and garish, it is said. But the ballad is essentially a product of a time in which people were dreadfully prone to do obvious things, and in no way concerned to be subtle. Fire, directness, energy of handling—these are the main necessities of the martial ballad, rather than any poetic subtlety; and all these were at Macaulay's command. 'Remember thy swashing blow' is the Shakespearean advice which might be given to the writer of the ballad warlike. And Macaulay always remembers his swashing blow. He has none of the deep poetic quality which informs the best work of Mr Kipling. But he does not aim at it. He keeps within a limit and a kind; and in that kind does very excellent pieces of work; quite honest, healthy work, which may well be allowed to stand, even though a stronger than he be come upon him.

In spite of modern æsthetic reaction, Macaulay, we think, will surely stand. If not an authentic god, he is at least a demigod, the most brilliant of Philistines, elevated to the Pantheon of literature by virtue of a quite supra-Philistine power. Macaulay is the Sauric deity of English letters, the artist of the obvious —but an artist none the less.

EMERSON

THERE was a child for whom the capital good and end of life was to see wheels go round. Before a carriage in the street he would stop, plunged in ecstatic contemplation, and—like a Buddhist devotee with his mystic formula—ejaculate at intervals in adoring rapture, 'Wheel-go-wound! wheel-go-wound!' In the works of watches, in tops, in the spinning froth of his tea-cup, in everything whirlable, this unconscious vortical philosopher discerned and worshipped 'wheel-go-rounds.' With that tyrannous mandate, 'Want to see wheel-go-wound,' he insisted on paying his devotions to every such manifestation of orbital motion.

Which things are a parable. That child, it strikes us, should find his ripened ideal in Emerson's writing, which, as one critic has already remarked, revolves round itself, rather than progresses. The remark was made depreciatingly: but we prefer to regard this trait in Emerson as a characteristic, rather than a limitation. This vortical movement of his understanding impresses itself strongly on one's mind after reading a succession of his essays—or lectures, as many of them originally were. Perhaps, indeed, the necessities of a lecturer, and the mental habit induced by much lecturing, may partly be responsible for it. An audience with difficulty follows an ascending sequence of thought, especially on abstruse

subjects ; where the snapping of a single link, a momentary lapse of attention, may render all which follows unintelligible ; and, at the best, it is uneasy to pick up again the dropped clue. But if the lecture circle round a single idea, such slips of fatigued attention are not fatal : what you have failed to grasp from one aspect, is presently offered and seized from another. The advantages of such a method for such a purpose are obvious. It is, at any rate, Emerson's method to a very large extent. Some one idea is suggested at the outset, and the rest of the essay is mainly a marvellous amplification of it. In some of these essays he is like a great eagle, sailing in noble and ample gyres, with deliberate beat of the strong wing, round the eyrie where his thought is nested.

The essay on Plato is a notable example. He starts with the declaration of Plato's universality :

> These sentences contain the culture of nations ; these are the corner-stones of schools ; these are the fountain-head of literatures. A discipline it is in logic, arithmetic, taste, symmetry, poetry, language, rhetoric, ontology, morals or practical wisdom. There was never such range of speculation. Out of Plato come all things that are still written or debated among men of thought. . . . Plato is philosophy, and philosophy, Plato.

His genius allies the universal with the particular, so that it becomes all-continent. So Emerson begins, and round this declaration the whole essay revolves. This Allness of Plato, this

combination of universality with particularity, —he takes this idea in his two hands, and turns it about on every side, surveys it from every aspect. Having trampled it out with his feet (one would say), he tosses it on his horns, till the air is alive with the winnowing of it. He conjures with it, till the Protean modifications and transmutations and reappearances of it dazzle the attention and amaze the mind. He touches on Socrates, and Socrates forthwith becomes a reincarnation of the same idea, in his homely practicality and dæmonic wisdom— again the universal and the particular. We will not say but that we sometimes tire of these brilliant metamorphoses, these transmigrations of a single conception through innumerable forms. Sometimes we could cry 'Enough!' and wish the repose of a more vertebrate method. But one thing he has effectually secured—we shall remember with emphasis that Plato was universal, and the synthesis at once of limit and immensity.

The 'wheel-go-round' quality of his mind appears even in the detail of his style; as (in Swedenborg's image) each fragment of a crystal repeats the structure of the whole:

> A man who could see two sides of a thing was born. The wonderful synthesis so familiar in nature; the upper and the under side of the medal of Jove; the union of impossibilities, which reappears in every object; its real and its ideal power,—was now also transferred entire to the consciousness of a man.

That is a simple and casual, but characteristic, example. Statements are not left single, but are iterated and reiterated in form on form. You have thus within the great volutions of the essay at large innumerable little revolutions,—wheels within wheels like the motions of the starry heavens ; nay, the individual sentence revolves on its own axis, one might say. The mere opulence of his imagery is a temptation to this.

No prose-writer of his time had such resources of imagery essentially poetic in nature as Emerson—not even Ruskin. His prose is more fecund in imagery,and happier in imagery, than his poetry,—one of the proofs (we think) that he was not primarily a poet, undeniable though some of his poetry is. He had freer and ampler scope and use of all his powers in prose, even of those powers in their nature specifically poetic. It is a thing curious, but far from unexampled. With such figurative range, such easy and inexhaustible plasticity of expression, so nimble a perception, this iterative style was all but inevitable. That opulent mouth could not pause at a single utterance. His understanding played about a thought like lightning about a vane. It suggested numberless analogies, an endless sequence of associated ideas,countless aspects, shifting facets of expression; and it were much if he should not set down a poor three or four of them. We, hard-pushed for our one pauper phrase, may call it excess in him : to Emerson, doubtless, it was austerity.

Moreover, when we examine closely those larger revolutions of thought on which we first dwelt, it becomes visible—even in such an essay as that 'Plato' which we took as the very type and extreme example of his peculiar tendency—that Emerson has his own mode of progression. The gyres are widening gyres, each sweep of the unflagging wing is in an ampler circuit. Each return of the idea reveals it in a deeper and fuller aspect; with each mental cycle we look down upon the first conception in an expanded prospect. It is the progression of a circle in stricken water. So, from the first casting of the idea into the mind, its agitations broaden repercussively outward; repeated, but ever spreading in repetition. And thus the thought of this lofty and solitary mind is cyclic, not like a wheel, but like the thought of mankind at large; where ideas are always returning on themselves, yet their round is steadily 'widened with the process of the suns.'

It was an almost inevitable condition of his unique power that Emerson's mind should have a certain isolation and narrowness, a revolving round its own fixed and personal axis, corresponding with the tendency already analysed. Yet in another view it often surprises by a breadth of interest no one could have predicted in this withdrawn philosopher, this brooder over Plato and the Brahmins. He has a shrewd, clear outlook upon practical life,

all the sounder for his serene detachment from it. For example, the English nation was never passed through so understanding and complete an analysis as by this casual visitor of our shores. It took nothing less than this American Platonist to note at once with such sympathy and such aloof dispassionateness all the strength and weakness of the Saxon-Norman-Celtic-Danish breed. He perceives, let us say, the intense, victorious, admirable, exasperating common sense of the Englishman, with its backing of impenetrable self-belief; neither hating nor overpowered by it. Hear the enjoying *verve* of his brilliant summary:

> The young men have a rude health which runs into peccant humors. They drink brandy like water, cannot expend their quantities of waste strength on riding, hunting, swimming, and fencing, and run into absurd frolics with the gravity of the Eumenides. They stoutly carry into every nook and corner of the earth their turbulent sense: leaving no lie uncontradicted; no pretension unexamined. They chew haschisch; cut themselves with poisoned creases; swing their hammock in the boughs of the Bohan Upas; taste every poison; buy every secret; at Naples they put St Januarius's blood in an alembic; they saw a hole into the head of the 'winking Virgin,' to know why she winks; measure with an English footrule every cell of the Inquisition, every Turkish caaba, every Holy of Holies; translate and send to Bentley the arcanum bribed and bullied from shuddering Brahmins; and measure their strength by the terror they cause.

It could only have been written by a man who united with the profound common sense of eminent genius the profound uncommon sense of eminent genius. The one gave him sympathy; the other enabled him to possess his soul before a spectacle which compels most foreigners either to worship or execration. So also he can write on wealth with a sanity of perception at once homely and philosophic, which is worth the reading either of a man of ledgers or a man of libraries, a poet or a pedlar. Uncle Sam had 'hitched his wagon to a star'; but he kept a vigorous sap of the Uncle Sam who hitches his wagon to a prairie-hoss—and knows how to swop it.

DANTE

THE enormous Roman Empire, blown upon by the winds of barbarism, split like a rending sail into East and West. Reunited for a space by Constantine, it tore again under his successors; and thenceforth 'East was East, and West was West.' The East shrank to the limp and meagre Byzantine Empire; the West smouldered away in Gothic fire, till Rome was tacitly abandoned to the Popes. Charlemagne took up the Western succession, and dreamed himself the father of a new Cæsarean line, Overlords of Italy and the West. But the worms had not finished their imperial banquet in the sepulchre of Aix-la-Chapelle, when his own dominion fell asunder to East and West, parting into Germany and France. Germany itself was dashed to fragments by the Sclavs, till loosely recompacted by a Saxon chief. His son Otho entered Italy, like Charlemagne, to help the Pope; and obtained Charlemagne's reward — the succession to the Roman Emperors of the West.

Thus the title of the German Emperors had to do much less with Germany than with a 'Holy Roman Empire' which was really as dead as Julius Cæsar. But the Papacy had planted a thorn in its own side; for thenceforth the German Emperors were obsessed by the ambition to make their Italian title a sovereign

fact; whence constant strife between Emperor and Pope, in which Italians took opposite sides.

This, which is so little to us, was everything to Dante. For though his father had been a Guelf, he was a fierce Ghibelline, or partisan of the Emperor. To us, in the perspective of history, this Imperial claim seems the shadowiest anachronism. We wonder that sane Emperors could waste blood and treasure on it, with their own Germany turbulent and ununited behind them: as if Alfred had set out to conquer France before he had the petty kings of England under his heel. But four centuries of recognition had made the title real to the Italians, and all tradition was behind it. Moreover, it came to embody the perpetual struggle of State against Church: and it was in this practical light that it appealed to Dante. But in Florence the victorious Guelfs themselves split into 'Blacks' and 'Whites,' or *Neri* and *Bianchi;* and the Ghibellines (including Dante) curiously joined the *Bianchi*, the popular party.

Into this distracted city Durante, or Dante, Alighieri was born. Who dreams that the supreme Italian poet and the supreme English poet bore almost an identical surname? Yet so it is. Alighiero (the name of Dante's grandfather) is a German name, and probably was derived from Aldiger, which means 'Rulespear.' A better city for the growth of poet or

artist there could scarce be than Florence It was more like a Greek than a modern city, and of all cities most like Athens in her prime. The same 'fierce democracy' clung with the same intense local patriotism to a fatherland nested within the city walls. The same fullness of trade nurtured it to importance. The same circumscribed life turned its energies inward, and created from a municipality the image of a State in miniature. Beyond the walls its territory was less than that of Athens. Its pent-up vitality seethed in the same relentless factions, though the final result was different. And this inward-driven vitality broke forth, like a volcano, in the same surprising and abundant shower of diversified genius. Narrow limits are good for genius. Dante and Michael Angelo are proof enough.

All the narrowed intensity and greatness of Florence seem to be in Dante, and must have been fostered by its training. He grew up in a little grey city, full of pictorial sight and sound, which was creating itself into art. He saw on market days, through its narrow streets overbrowed by the projecting upper stories of the houses, the mules pass laden with oil and wine from the country, carts piled with corn and drawn by great white oxen, across their foreheads the beam which yoked them to the cart. The oxen shone in the sun which cut the large shadows. In the small squares whence were seen the numberless towers of Florence, sharp

against the intense blue, the red and green and white-gowned citizens paused to chat of politics. He grew up a politician, for politics were a second business to every Florentine. Were you for Pope or for Emperor ? Were you a White and for the people, or a Black and for the nobles ? You might see Corso Donati, the able and reckless leader of the Blacks, the Castlereagh of Florence, riding through the streets on his black horse, with a troop of friends and kinsmen. The people, despite themselves, cheer the handsome and stately dare-devil whom they hate : the White leaders, our rising Dante among them, pass with bent brows, to which he returns a disdainful glance ; and it is well if no broil arise. For Corso presently was Dante's bitter enemy ; and our friend Guido Cavalcanti is rasher of temper than we. Dante as a youth had seen the houses of the Galigai go to the ground because one of the family had killed a Florentine—in France !

Poetry, too, early engaged him. He was hand in glove with the Guido Cavalcanti already mentioned ; and Cavalcanti had succeeded Guido Guinicelli as the second of mark to write Italian poetry in the 'New Style.' What had been written before, in Sicily for instance, was imitation of Provençal song. Dante himself had studied, perhaps written, Provençal verse, which was a second tongue to literary Italians. It had perished before the wrath of the Church which it assailed : the

new style kept clear of the overt attack which had proved disastrous. Perhaps through his connexion with men like Cavalcanti he became the friend of Giotto the painter and most of the artistic and intellectual 'set' of Florence. This Dante whom Giotto painted is other than the Dante we know. Student, politician, poet, self-centred, doubtless strong of will and passions, but a softer, lighter, more sensitive, perhaps gayer Dante; a brilliant youth, to whom all things were possible. He and his friends picked sixty Florentine ladies whom they judged fairest, and referred to them by numbers in their poems. Not much melancholy here! Yet Dante, like Milton, it is likely, 'joked wi' deeficulty,' as some verses of his hint, no better than Milton's on Hobson the carrier. At the same time he was having his baptism of war at Campaldino, and felt not a little frightened, as he ingenuously says. The flower of this time was that beautiful and mysterious poem, the *Vita Nuova*, on which no two critics agree. There *was* a Beatrice, doubtless; but already she is so overlaid with allegory that not a fact about her can be deemed certain—save that she was *not* Beatrice Portinari. That is the tantalizing truth.

After what he calls the death of Beatrice, our Dante went considerably astray. We may take that from outside witness; though even here his own language is so largely allegorical that we can say little more. Perhaps it

was in reaction from this that he made his fatal entry into leading politics. At any rate, it was no mere political wrong which soured and hardened him. Fiery inner experience and dire spiritual struggle had gone over him and set the trenches on his brow, before Florence cast him without her walls. Now, too, he began the grim study which made him one of the most all-knowing minds of the age. Then he came to power in a ' White ' government, to be overset by a ' Black ' revolution, was thrown forth from his city, and began that ' wandering of his feet perpetually ' which has made him, more truly than Byron, ' the Pilgrim of Eternity.'

Thenceforth he looked to a German invasion for his restoration ; and a personal motive deepened the intensity of his stern Ghibelline politics. The ' bitter bread ' of clientage sharpened the iron lines about his mouth. All his learning, all his misery, all that Florence and his Florentine blood and the world had taught him, went to the making of his great poem. It is most narrow, most universal ; it is the middle ages, it is Dante ; it is Florence, it is the world. It is so civic, that the damned and the saints amid their tortures and beatitudes turn excited politicians ; and not merely politicians, but Italian politicians ; and not merely Italian politicians, but Florentine politicians ; and not merely Florentine politicians but Ghibelline politicians ; and not merely Ghibelline, but Dantean politicians. An act of

treachery to Florence is enough for damnation. The heavens look forward and exult, to the coming of the German into Italy. We must realize that for Dante the Emperor meant the salvation of Italy, the Church, and himself, to understand these things.

Yet the vastness of his understanding and conception makes his poem overwhelmingly impressive to Teutons who look on mediæval religion as a myth. That poem is so august, so shot with lights of peace and tenderness, that it is accepted as the gospel of mediæval Christendom. Withal it has a severity stern even to truculence, which is of Dante pure and simple —another spirit from that ' Hymn to the Sun ' of the gentle Francis of Assisi. And all this because he is Dante—that strange unity of which we know so much, and so little.

THE 'NIBELUNGEN LIED'

SAVE by a heaven-born poet, who should perform on the Teuton epic the miracle which Edward FitzGerald performed on Omar Khayyám, the *Nibelungen Lied* could only be represented for Englishmen in prose—such Biblical prose as that into which Mr Andrew Lang and his coadjutors rendered Homer. This thing has been done. A woman, Miss Margaret Armour, is the successful translator, and I congratulate her on her achievement. She has, say *cognoscenti* in German, taken serious and indefensible liberties of omission and commission with the difficult and sometimes diffuse text of the original. Moreover, she is apt to be too stiffly and crowdedly archaic—overdoing her admirable model, Mr Lang. Yet, get only a little used to this, and her version will grow on you as a thing of spirit and picturesqueness. It is hardly gear for woman to meddle with, this hirsute old German epic ; yet this woman has made of it better work than most men could do—an English narrative which holds you and strikes sparks along your blood. I, like thousands more, cannot read the crabbed Mediæval German ; but in this translation I have exulted over genius, authentic genius, brought home to me in my mother tongue.

There is no space here to analyse the tale : an epic Homeric in primitive directness of

narrative, but brooded over by the fierce spirit of the murkyNorth. Homeric are the repetitions of set epithet ; Homeric is the simple pathos ; more than Homeric the joy of battle ; Homeric the overlaying of an earlier story with the manners of a later budding civilization. But there is no Homeric imagery ; the narrative is utterly direct, and, when the poet strikes an image, he iterates it with *naïf* pride in his discovery. 'A fire-red wind blew from the swords' ; ' They struck hot-flowing streams from the helmets '—this image is made to do duty with child-like perseverance in many forms. With simple delight he dwells on details of attire, rich yet primitive, costlily barbaric. The men's robes are of silk, gold-inwrought, and lined with —what think you ?—fish-skins ! Sable and ermine and silk adorn the damsels, bracelets are over their sleeves : but no pale aristocracy this of Burgundy. ' Certes, they had been grieved if their red cheeks had not outshone their vesture.' Very quiet and plain are the poet's grieving pictures, a lesson to the modern novelist, with his luxury of woe. They make no figure as elegant extracts ; but in its place every simple line tells. Kriemhild is borne from her slaughtered lover's coffin in a swoon, ' as her fair body would have perished for sorrow.' No more ; and one asks no more. But it is in battle that this truly great Unknown finds himself, and sayeth ' Ha ! ha ! ' among the trumpets.

Unique in all literature is the culmination of this epic of Death. Kriemhild, the loving woman turned to an Erinnys by implacable wrong, has invited all her kindred of Burgundy to the court of her second husband, Etzel the Hun. With them comes dark Hagen, the murderer of her first husband, Siegfried the hero unforgotten. On him she has vowed revenge ; and her trap draws round the doomed Burgundians. The squires of Gunthur, the Burgundian King, she has lodged apart : with them abides Dankwart, the brother of Hagen. In the hall of Etzel's castle Gunther and his nobles sit in armour, feasting with the Hunnish King and Queen : the little son of Etzel and Kriemhild, Ortlieb, is summoned in, and wanders round among the stranger guests. Fatal sits Kriemhild, watching her netted prey, expecting the signal which shall turn the feast to death. It comes ; in other manner, and to other issue than she dreams. Arms clang on the stairs : the door flies wide, a mailed and bloody figure clanks in terrible. It is Dankwart. The Huns have set upon King Gunther's squires and slain them to a man ; he has fought his way through the hostile bands, alone. At those tidings, grim Hagen springs erect, and mocks with fierce irony :

' I marvel much what the Hunnish knights whisper in each other's ears. I ween they could well spare him that standeth at the door, and hath brought this court-news to the Burgun-

dians. I have long heard Kriemhild say that she could not bear her heart's dole. Now drink we to Love, and taste the King's wine. The young prince of the Huns shall be the first.'

To the overture of that dusky mockery the Burgundians rise. ' With that, Hagen slew the child Ortlieb, that the blood gushed down on his hand from his sword, and the head flew up into the Queen's lap.' Up the hall and down the hall pace the terrible strangers, slaying as they go : Etzel and Kriemhild sit motionless, gazing on the horror. At last they fly : the doors are barred, and the Burgundians pass exterminating over all within.

It is but the beginning. All the country round flocks to Etzel's summons. Troop after troop of Huns win into the dreadful hall ; but from the dreadful hall no Hun comes back. ' There was silence. Over all, the blood of the dead men trickled through the crannies into the gutters below.' In the midst of a magnificently imagined *crescendo* of horror and heroism, death closes in, adamantine, on the destined Burgundian band. I am almost tempted to say that it is the grandest situation in all epic. And of the dramatic force with which it is related there can be no question.

HEALTH AND HOLINESS

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN BROTHER ASS, THE BODY, & HIS RIDER, THE SOUL

THIS is an age when everywhere the rights of the weaker against the stronger are being examined and asserted. Is it coincidence merely, that the protest of the body against the tyranny of the spirit is also audible and even hearkened ? Within the Church itself, which has ever fostered the claims of the oppressed against the oppressor, a mild and rational appeal has made itself heard. For the body is the spouse of the spirit, and the democratic element in the complex state of man. In the very courts of the spirit the claims—might we say the rights ?—of the body are being tolerantly judged.

It was not so once. The body had no rights against her husband, the spirit. One might say, she had no marital rights : she was a squaw, a hewer of wood and drawer of water for her heaven-born mate. Did she rebel, she was to be starved into submission. Was she slack in obedience, she was to be punished by the infliction of further tasks. Did she groan that things were beyond her strength, she was goaded into doing them, while the tyrannous spirit bitterly exclaimed on her slovenly performance. To overdrive a donkey was bar-

barous : to over-drive one's own lawful body a meritorious act. A poet I know has put, after his own fashion, the case between body and spirit :*

Said sprite o' me to body o' me :
' A malison on thee, trustless creature,
That prat'st thyself mine effigy
To them which view thy much misfeature.
My hest thou no ways slav'st aright,
Though slave-service be all thy nature :
An evil thrall I have of thee,
Thou adder coiled about delight ! '

Said body o' me to sprite o' me :
' Since bricks were wroughten without straw,
Was never task-master like thee !
Who art more evil of thy law
Than Egypt's sooty Mizraim—
That beetle of an ancient dung :
Naught recks it thee though I in limb
Wax meagre—so thy songs be sung.'

Thus each by other is mis-said,
And answereth with like despite ;
The spirit bruises body's head ;
The body fangs the heel of sprite ;
And either hath the other's wrong.
And ye may see, that of this stour
My heavy life doth fall her flower.

But the hallowed plea for slave-driving the body was not poetry, of which this writer's fleshly spouse so piteously complains ; it was

[*The verses are Francis Thompson's own.]

virtue. And the crowning feature of the happy and approved relation between body and spirit was this : that the luckless body could not escape by obedience and eschewing rebellion : she was then visited with stripes and hunger lest she *should* rebel. The body, in fact, was a proclaimed enemy ; and as an enemy it was treated. If it began to feel but a little comfortable, high time had come to set about making it uncomfortable, or—like Oliver—it would be asking for more.

Modern science and advanced physiology must needs be felt even in the science of spirituality. Men begin to suspect that much has been blamed to the body which should justly be laid on the mismanagement of its master. It is felt that the body has rights ; nay, that the neglect of those rights may cause it to take guiltless vengeance on the soul. We may sin against the body in other ways than are catalogued in Liguori ; and impoverished blood—who knows ?—may mean impoverished morals. The ancients long ago held that love was a derangement of the hepatic functions. '*Torrit jecur, urit jecur,*' says Horace with damnable iteration ; and Horace ought to know. And now, not many years ago, a distinguished Jesuit director of souls, in his letters to his penitents, has hinted over and over again that spiritual disease may harbour in a like vicinage.

Within the limits of his own meaning this spiritual director was wisely right. He was aware

that men of sedentary habits and unshakably introspective temperament may endure spiritual torments for which a fortnight's walking-tour is more sovereign than the Exercises of St Ignatius. And how many such men are there now ? Perhaps for this very reason the delicate connexion between mind and body is recognized as it never was before. In truth, Health, as he suggested, may be no mean part of Holiness ; and not by mere superficial analogy has imagery drawn from the athlete been perpetually applied to the Saint. That I do not speak without warrant let passages from his published 'Letters'* show :

'As for the evil thoughts, I have so uniformly remarked in your case that they are dependent upon your state of health, that I say without hesitation, begin a course of Vichy and Carlsbad.' . . . . 'Better far to eat meat on Good Friday than to live in war with every one about us. I fear much you do not take enough food and rest. You stand in need of both, and it is not wise to starve yourself into misery. Jealousy and all similar passions become intensified when the body is weak.' . . . . 'Your account of your spiritual condition is not very brilliant ; still you must not lose courage. . . . Much of your present suffering comes, I fear, from past recklessness in the matter of health.'

We might quote indefinitely ; but it is enough to remind the reader how much and

* Letters of George Porter, S.J., Archbishop of Bombay.

how wisely has the modern director adapted himself to the modern Man. Nay, the very conditions of modern sanctity may be said to have changed, so changed are we. There was a time—strange as it may seem, there was a time upon the earth when man flew in the face of the east wind. He did not like the east wind—his proverbs remain to tell us so ; but this was merely because it gave him catarrh, or rheumatism, or inflamed throat, and such gross outward maladies. It did not dip his soul in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse ; his hair, and skin, and heart were not made desiccate together. A spiritual code which grew into being for this Man whose moral nature remained unruffled by the east wind, may surely be said to have leaked its validity before it reached *us*. He was a being of another creation. He ate, and feared not ; he drank, and in all Shakespeare there is no allusion to *delirium tremens ;* his schoolmaster flogged him large-heartedly, and he was almost more tickled by the joke than by the cane ; he wore a rapier at his side, and stabbed or was stabbed by his brother-man in pure good fellowship and sociable high spirits. For him the whole apparatus of virtue was constructed, a robust system fitted to a robust time. Strong, forthright minds were suited by strong, forthright direction, redounding vitality by severities of repression ; the hot wine of life needed allay. But to our generation uncompromising fasts and severities

of conduct are found to be piteously alien ; not because, as rash censors say, we are too luxurious, but because we are too nervous, intricate, devitalized. We find our austerities ready-made. The east wind has replaced the discipline, dyspepsia the hair-shirt. Either may inflict a more sensitive agony than a lusty anchorite suffered from lashing himself to blood. It grows a vain thing for us to mortify the appetite,—would we had the appetite to mortify !—macerate an evanescing flesh, bring down a body all too untimely spent and forewearied, a body which our liberal-lived sires have transmitted to us quite effectually brought down. The pride of life is no more ; to live is itself an ascetic exercise ; we require spurs to being, not a snaffle to rein back the ardour of being. Man is his own mortification. Hamlet has increased and multiplied, and his seed fill the land. Would any Elsinore director have advised austerities for the Prince, or judged to the letter his self-accusings ?—and to this complexion has many a one come. The very laughers ask their night-lamps

Is all laughed in vain ?

Merely to front existence, for some, is a surrender of self, a choice of ineludibly rigorous abnegation.

It was not so with our fortunate (or, at least, earth-happier) ancestors. For them, doubtless, the old idea worked roughly well. They lashed

themselves with chains ; they went about in the most frightful forms of hair-shirt, which grew stiffened with their blood ; and yet were unrestingly energetic. For us it would mean valetudinarian impotence; which, without heroic macerations, is but too apt to overtake us. They turned anchorites in the English country, the English fens, among the English fogs and raw blasts ; they exposed themselves defenceless to all the horror of an English summer ; and they were not converted into embodied cramp and arthritis. This implies a constitution we can but dimly conjecture, to which austerity, so to speak, was a wholesome antidote. Their bodies were hot colts, which really needed training and breaking—and very strong breaking, too. They had often, questionless, to be ridden with a cruel curb. When we look at Italy of the Renascence, at England of the sixteenth century, we are amazed. There were giants in those days. Those were the days of *virtu*—when the ideal of men was vital force, to do everything with their whole strength. And they did it. In good and in evil they redounded. *Pecca fortiter*, said Luther ; and they sinned strongly. Ezzelin fascinating men with the horror of his tyranny, Aretin blazoning his lusts and infamies, Sforza ravening his way to a throne, Cæsar Borgia conquering Italy with a poisoned sword, would have sneered at the scented sins of the present day. The seething energies of our sixteenth century,—fighting, hating, stabbing,

plotting, throwing out poetry in splendid reckless floods and cataracts,—seem to emanate from beings of another order than ourselves. And these men who are thrown to the forefront of history imply a fierce undercurrent of general vitality. The mediæval men fight amidst the torrid lands of the East jerkined and breeched with iron which it makes us ache to look upon; our men in khaki fall out by hundreds during peace-manœuvres on an English down. They cheapened pain, those forefathers of ours; they endured and apportioned the most monstrous tortures with equal carelessness, reckless of their own suffering or that of others. Read the tortures inflicted on the rebels against Henry IV; and how 'good old Sir Thomas Erpingham' rode round one of them, taunting him in the awful crisis of his agony. Yet Sir Thomas died at Agincourt in the odour of knightly honour, and doubtless was as far from remembering that thoughtless little incivility as any one was from remembering it against him. We cannot conceive the exuberant vitality and nervous insensibility of these men. Some image of the latter quality we may get by turning to the ascetics of the East, who still swing themselves by the heels over a smoky fire, and practise other public forms of self-torture, with (apparently) small nervous exhaustion. Here and there among ourselves, of course, such conditions still exist to witness what was once usual. Such bodies, we may well

believe, needed the awe of hunger and stripes, and, without rigorous rebuke from the spirit, were always lying in wait for its heel.

But not only have conditions changed: there is another influence, unrecognized, yet subtly potent in affecting an altered attitude towards the externals of asceticism. The interaction between body and spirit is understood, or at least apprehended (for comprehended it cannot be), as never it was before. St Paul, indeed, that profoundly original and intuitive mind, long since saw and first proclaimed it, in its broad theological aspect. 'I do not that good which I will; but the evil which I hate, that I do. . . . The good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. . . . I find then a law, that when I will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

That was the primal cry of the discovery, which has never been more pregnantly and poignantly expressed. Upon it arose a complex theological system; but outside that system the realization of this mysterious truth went no further. One might almost say that its intimacy was removed and deadened by the circumvallation of theological truisms. But the

progress of physiological research has brought it home to the flesh of man. Science, not for the sole time or the last, has become the witness and handmaid of theology. Scripture swore that the sins of the fathers should be visited on the children to the third and fourth generation; Science has borne testimony to that asseveration with the terrible teaching of heredity. Of the internecine grapple between body and spirit, Science, quick to question the spirit, has in her own despite witnessed much. With the fable of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* Stevenson has simply incarnated St Paul's thesis in unforgettable romance.

But upon this quickened and vital sense of the immemorial grapple has come also a sense of its unsuspected complexity. We can no longer set body against spirit and let them come to grips after the light-hearted fashion of our ancestors. We realize that their intertwinings are of infinite delicacy, endless multiplicity: no stroke upon the one but is innumerably reverberated by the other. We cannot merely ignore the body: it will not be ignored, and has unguardable avenues of retaliation. This is no rough-and-tumble fight, with no quarter for the vanquished. We behold ourselves swayed by ghostly passions; the past usurps us; the dead replay their tragedy on our fleshly stage. To the body itself we owe a certain inevitable obedience, as the father owes a measure of obeisance to the child, and the ruler is governed by the

ruled. The imperial spirit must order his going by his fleshly shackles; he must hear it said, 'Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall bind thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.' And wisdom will often submit to the tyrannous impotence of the inferior. For though weak compliance be fatal, arrogant rigidity is like to be only less so. The stumbling of the feeble subject shall bring down the strong ruler; a brain-fever change a straight-walking youth into a flagitious and unprincipled wastrel. But recently we had the medically-reported case of a model lad who after an illness proved a liar and a pilferer. It were unsafe, truly, to reason from extremes; but extremes bring into light forces and tendencies which in their wonted action go unsuspected.

Even in the heroic ages, of men and religion, did these things play no part unrecognized? Was the devil always the devil? Whether the devil might on occasion be the stomach (as the Archbishop hints) may be a perilous question; though some will make small scruple that the stomach may be the devil. That the demon could have been purged from Saul by medicinal draughts were a supposition too much in the manner of the Higher Criticism; though to Macbeth's interrogation: "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" the modern M.D. of Edinburgh would answer: 'Sire, certainly!' He can often purge from

the mind a rooted trouble ; nor do we in such cases throw physic to the dogs. But as men lay their sins on the devil who indeed save him the labour of tempting them, so he may be accused for that which comes only from the mishandling of their own bodies. The author of mischief can leave much mischief to be worked for him, and needs but to wait on men's mistakes. Even in the ascetic way, shall one aver such error could not have intruded ? It is dangerous treading here ; yet with reverence I adventure : since the mistake of personal speculation is after all merely a mistake, and no one will impute to it authority.

Grace does not cast out nature ; but the way of grace is founded on nature. Sanctity is genius in religion ; the Saint lives for and in religion, as the man of genius lives for and in his peculiar attainment. Nay, it might be said that sanctity is the supreme form of genius, and the Saints the only true men of genius ; with the great difference that sanctity is dependent on no special privilege—or curse—of temperament. Both are the outcome of a man's inner and individual love, and are characterized by an eminent fervour, which is the note of love in action. Bearing these things in mind, it should not surprise us to find occasional parallelisms between the psychology of the Saints and the psychology of men of genius,—parallelisms which study might perhaps extend, and which are specially observable

where the genius is of the poetic or artistic kind, in the broad sense of the word 'artistic.' Both Saint and Poet undergo a preparation for their work; and in both a notable feature of this preparation is a period of preliminary retirement. Even the Poets most in and of the world experience it in some form; though in their case it may be an inward process only, leaving no trace on their outward life. It is part of the mysterious law which directs all fruitful increase. The lily, about to seed, withdraws from the general gaze, and lapses into the claustral bosom of the water. Spiritual incubation obeys the same unheard command; whether it be Coleridge in his cottage at Nether Stowey, or Ignatius in his cave at Manresa. In Poet, as in Saint, this retirement is a process of pain and struggle. For it is nothing else than a gradual conformation to artistic law. He absorbs the law into himself; or rather he is himself absorbed into the law, moulded to it, until he become sensitively respondent to its faintest motion, as the spiritualized body to the soul. Thenceforth he needs no guidance from formal rule, having a more delicate rule within him. He is a law to himself, or indeed he is the law. In like manner does the Saint receive into himself and become one with divine law, whereafter he no longer needs to follow where the flocks have trodden, to keep the beaten track of rule; his will has undergone the heavenly magnetization by

which it points always and unalterably towards God.

In both Saint and Poet this process is followed by a rapid and bountiful development of power: in both there are throes, as it were the throes of birth. Light and darkness succeed each other like the successive waves of sun and gloom on a hillside under a brightly windy sky; but the gloom is prolonged, the light swift and intermittent. The despairing chasms of agony into which the Saints are plunged have their analogy in these paroxysms of loss and grief related by Chateaubriand, Berlioz, and others. How far these things are conditioned by the body in the case of the Poet is obscure. If the uniform nature, in them all, of these emotional crises points to a psychic origin, it is none the less difficult to avoid the suspicion, the probable suspicion, that physical reaction is an accessory cause. In the case of the Saint, shall we hold the body always guiltless? Did those passionate austerities of the Manresa cavern (for one typical instance) leave the body hale and sane? Had we to reckon solely with the natural order, the answer would not be doubtful; and, since sanctity has never asserted itself an antidote against the consequences of indiscreet actions, I know not why one should shrink from drawing the likely conclusion and adventuring the likely hypothesis. That celestial unwisdom of fast, vigil, and corporal chastening must, it is like, have exposed Ignatius to the

reactions of the weakened body. Fast is the diet of angels, said St Athanasius; and Milton echoed him:

> Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet.

But when mortals surfeit on that food, and superadd stripes and night-watchings, the forespent body is prone to strange revenges. In some measure, is it not possible such may have mingled with the experiences and temptations of Ignatius? The reality of these ghostly conflicts there is not need to doubt; I do not doubt. But with them who shall say what may have been the intermixture of subjective symptoms fumes of the devitalized flesh? When, the agony past, the battle won, the wedlock with divine law achieved, Ignatius emerged from the cave to carry his hard-won spiritual arms against the world, he saw coiled round a wayside cross a green serpent. Was this indeed an apparition, to be esteemed beside the heavenly monitions of the cavern, or rather such stuff as Macbeth's air-drawn dagger, the issue of an overwrought brain? I recall a poet,* passing through that process of seclusion and interior gestation already considered. In his case the psychological manifestations were undoubtedly associated with disorder of the body. In solitude he underwent profound sadness and suffered brief exultations of power: the wild miseries

[* The poet was Francis Thompson himself.]

of a Berlioz gave place to accesses of half-pained delight. On a day when the skirts of a prolonged darkness were drawing off from him, he walked the garden, inhaling the keenly languorous relief of mental and bodily convalescence ; the nerves sensitized by suffering. Pausing in reverie before an arum, he suddenly was aware of a minute white-stoled child sitting on the lily. For a second he viewed her with surprised delight, but no wonder ; then, returning to consciousness, he recognized the hallucination almost in the instant of her vanishing. The apparition had no connexion with his reverie ; and though not perhaps so strongly visual as to deceive an alert mind, suggests the possibility of such deception. Furthermore, one notes that the green serpent of St Ignatius, unlike the divine monitions in the cave, unlike the visions in general of the saints, was apparently purposeless : it had no function of warning, counsel, temptation, or trial. Yet repetitions of the experience in the Saint's after life make it rash, despite all this, to decide what is not capable of decision, and to say that it may have been a trick of fine-worn nerves.

There is at any rate a possibility that, even in the higher ascetic life, the means used to remove the stumbling-block of the body may get up in it a fresh stumbling-block, to a certain degree ; that, even here, Brother Ass may take his stubborn retaliation; and this is a possibility of which our ancestors had no dream. St

Ignatius himself came to think that he had done penance not wisely but too well at Manresa ; nevertheless it was only the after-effects at which he glanced, the impairing of his physical utility in later years. With modern lack of constitution the possibility is increased. No spread of knowledge can efface asceticism ; but we may, perhaps, wear our asceticism with a difference.

The devil is out of most of our bodies before our youth is long past ; in many it scarce exists. The modern body hinders perfection after the way of the weakling ; it scandalizes by its feebleness and sloth ; it exceeds by luxury and the softer forms of vice, not by hot insurgence ; it abounds in vanity, frivolity, and all the petty sins of the weakling which vitiate the spirit ; it pushes to pessimism, which is the wail of the weakling turning back from the press ; to agnosticism, which is sometimes a form of mental sloth—' It is too much trouble to have a creed.' It no longer lays forcible hands on the spirit, but clogs and hangs back from it. And in some sort there was more hope with the old body than with this new one. When the energies of the old body were once yoked to the chariot-pole of God, they went fast. But what shall be made of a body whose energies lie down in the road ? When to these things is added the crowning vice and familiar accompaniment of weakness—selfishness, it is clear indeed that we require an asceticism ; but not

so clear that the asceticism we require is the old asceticism. Can this inertia of the modern body be met by breaking still further the beast already over-feeble for its load ? It is not possible. In those old valiant days, when the physical frame waxed fat and kicked, the most ardent saints ended in the confession of a certain remorse for their tyrannous usage of the accursed flesh. St Ignatius, we have said, came to think he had needlessly crippled his body—after all, a necessary servant—by the unweighed severity of Manresa. Even the merciless Assisian—merciless towards himself, as tender towards all others—confessed on the deathbed of his slave-driven body: 'I have been too hard on Brother Ass.'

Yes, Brother Ass, poor Brother Ass, had been inhumanly ridden ; and but for his stubborn constitution would have gone nigh to hamper the sanctity he could not prevent. In these days he is a weak beast, and may not stand a tithe of the burdens a Francis of Assisi piled upon him with scarce more than a responsive groan. Chastening he needs : he will not sustain overmuch chastisement. Rules have been mitigated, in some of the severer Orders, to meet modern exigencies : but no mitigation can effectually alter their unsuitability to this modern Britain. They are not only obsolete : the whole incidence of them was devised for a sunny clime, a clime of olives, wine, and macaroni. Fasts fall plump and frequent in the

winter season, when in the North they mean unmeditated stress upon the young constitution; while the summer, when fast could be borne, goes almost free of fast. So you have Orders where scarce the rosiest novice passes his profession without an impaired, if not a shattered, constitution. Not so much the amount, but the incidence, of austerity needs revision. Not solely in the kingdoms of this world, but in the kingdom also of God, the administration may become infected by the red-tape microbe.

But this is to invade the domain of monastic asceticism, which is beyond my province. Quite enough is the weltering problem of secular religion. How shall asceticism address itself to this etiolated body of death? For all that I have said regards only the externals of asceticism. Asceticism in its essence is always and inevitably the same. The weak, dastardly, and selfish body of to-day needs an asceticism—never more. The task before religion is to persuade and constrain the body to take up its load. It demands great tenderness and great firmness, as with a child. The child is led by love, and swayed by authority. It must feel the love behind the inflexible will; the will always firm behind the love. And to-day, as never before, one must *love* the body, must be gently patient with it:

> Daintied o'er with dear devices,
> Which He loveth, for He grew.

The whole scheme of history displays the body as 'Creation's and Creator's crowning good.' The aim of all sanctity is the redemption of the body. The consummation of celestial felicity is reunion with the body. All is for the body; and holiness, asceticism itself, rest (next to love of God) on love of the body. As love, in modern Christianity, is increasingly come to be substituted for the motive-power of fear; may it not be that love of the body should increasingly replace hatred of the body as the motive even of asceticism? We need (as it were) to show a dismayed and trembling body, shrinking from the enormity of the world, that all, even rigour and suppression, is done in care for it. The incumbency of daily duty, the constant frets of the world and social intercourse, the intermittent friction of that ruined health which is to most of us the legacy from our hard-living ancestors, the steady mortification of our constitutional sloths and vanities—may not these things make in themselves a handsome asceticism, less heroic, but not less effectual than the showy austerities of our forefathers? A wise director, indeed, said, 'No.' Such external and unsought mortifications came to be borne as an habitual matter—grudged but accepted, like the gout or some pretty persistent ailment. The observation may be shrewdly right; but I confess I doubt it. The accumulated burthen of these things seems to me to exact a weary and daily—nay,

hourly fresh intention. If, however, voluntary inflictions be necessary to subdue this all-too-subdued body, they should not be far to seek without heroic macerations which very surely our stumbling Brother Ass cannot support.

The co-operation of the body must be enlisted in the struggle against the body. It is the lusts of the healthy body which are formidable; but to war with them the body (paradoxically) must be kept in health; the soldier must be fed, though not pampered. Without health, no energy; without energies, no struggle. Seldom does the *fainéant* become the Saint; the vigorous sinner often. *Pecca fortiter* (despite Luther) is no maxim of spirituality; but he that sins strongly has the stuff of sanctity, rather than the languid sinner. The energies need turning Godward; but the energies are most necessary. Prayer is the very sword of the Saints; but prayer grows tarnished save the brain be healthful, nor can the brain be long healthful in an unhealthy body. So you have that sage Archbishop already quoted advising against long morning devotions for weaker vessels: 'The brain requires some time after the night's rest, and some food, to regain its normal power,' says he. And again: 'You are suffering the consequences of the wilfulness as regards health in years long past; these consequences cannot be prevented now. The most you can do, the most you can hope for, is to lessen them as much as possible.' Or yet again: 'The most

you can do is to be patient, to avoid swearing and grumbling, to say some prayers mechanically, or to look at your crucifix.' These things are not said to Saints: but alas! sanctity has small beginnings; there are no short cuts, no 'royal roads' (as à Kempis says) to God. One must start even like these unheroic souls; and on those most weary small beginnings all the after-issues rest. Not so much to restrain, but to foster the energies of our *dilettanti* and foreweary bodies, and throw them on the ghostly Enemy; that is the task before us. For that, is this Fabian strategy all which remains to us?

To foster the energies of the body, yes; and to foster also the energies of the will: that is the crying need of our uncourageous day. There is no more deadly prevalent heresy than the mechanical theory which says: 'You are what you are, and you cannot be otherwise.' Linked with it is the false and sloven charity which pleads 'We are all precious scoundrels in some fashion; so let us love one another!'—the fraternity of criminals, the brotherly love of convicts. That only can come out of a man which was in a man; but the excessive can be pruned, the latent be educed; and this is the function of the will. The will is the lynch-pin of the faculties. Nor, more than the others, is it a stationary power, as modern materialism assumes it to be. The weak will can be strengthened, the strong will made stronger. The will grows by its own exercise, as the thews and

sinews grow : *vires acquirit eundo :* it increases like a snowball, by its own motion. I believe that the weakest man has will enough for his appointed exigencies, if he but develop it as he would develop a feeble body. To that special end, moreover, are addressed the sacramental means of the Church. But it is also terribly true that the will, like the bodily thews, can be atrophied by indolent disuse ; and at the present time numbers of men and women are suffering from just this malady. ' I cannot ' waits upon ' I tried not.' The active and stimulative, not the merely surgical asceticism, which should strike at this central evil of modernity, is indeed a thing to seek. Demanding so much sparing, so much spurring ; so much gentleness, so much unswervingness ; never so much to be considered, and never exacting more anxious consideration ; this poor fool of a present body is indeed a hard matter for the spiritual physician to handle, yet not beyond his power. The Church is ever changing to front a changing world ; *et plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* She brings forth out of her treasuries new things and old—even as does that world to which she ministers, which moves in circles, though in widening circles. She is so divinely adjusted to it, that nothing can it truly need but she shall automatically respond : the mere craving of the world's infant lips suffices to draw from her maternal and ever-yielded bosom the milk.

So she is now proving, with that insensible

gradualness in change, as of Nature's self, which is her secret. When very persecution has recognized the profound change in men, and vindictiveness forgoes the infliction of tortures which justice once held paternal amenities of correction, it would be strange if so tender a mother as the Church had maintained the rigidities of a discipline evolved for a race at once ruder and hardier than ourselves. The continual commutations of fasting and other physical penances, in the present day, sufficiently attest her policy. Of that more intimately discriminating relentingness which must rest with the private director, those letters of Archbishop Porter, more than once quoted, furnish a singularly commendable and sagacious example. The degree to which the current of a life is ruffled by the wind of circumstance, coloured by its own contained infirmities and affected by the nature of its source, has only in these latter days begun to be realized in all its profound extent. An age which sees the apotheosis of the personal mode in literature, an age in which self-revelations excite not impatience, but a tenacious interest far from wholly ignoble or merely curious, an age which has shifted its preoccupation from the type to the individual, naturally apprehends more subtly these complexities of the individual life. And the result is perhaps (even in that Church always the very heart, and that priesthood always the very members, of charity) a charity a thought nearer to the charity of the

Eternal. For it is a charity based on a more sensitive delicacy of justice ; and He is archetypal Charity because He is archetypal Justice.

And if the maternal cares of the Church be thus increased by the frailty of the modern body, she is not without maternal recompense. We have thus far regarded that profound change, so widely evident, as though it were an unmixed evil. But in all change, well looked into, the germinal good out-vails the apparent ill. A regard thus one-sided misses the most potent ally of the Church and ultimate stickler for ascetic religion—Nature. Nature, which some say abhors asceticism, in her larger and subtler processes steadily befriends—nay, enforces it. A favourite employment of men is the venting of these shallow libels on Nature. They have called her foe to chastity—her, who ruthlessly penalizes its violation. No less, looking largely back over human history, I discern in her a pertinacious purpose to exalt the spirit by the dematerialization (if I may use the phrase) of the body. Slow and insensible, that purpose at length bursts into light, so to speak, for our present eyes. For all those signs and symptoms, upon which I have insisted even to weariness—however ill from the mere material standpoint, what do they mean but the gradual decline of the human animal, the gradually ascending supremacy of the spirit on the stubborn ruins of the bodily fortress ; that we have, by an advance evident from its very pain,

Moved upward, working out the beast ?

In one large word (is it over-bold ?) Nature is doing for the Church what each individual saint, passionately anticipative, had formerly to do for himself. She is macerating the body.

Look but back on the past. Realize the riotous animality of primitive man. Witness the amazing progenitive catalogue of Jewish king after Jewish king, the lengthening bede-roll of his wives : then reflect that these men still thirsted, with more than the thirst of a second Charles or a Louis Bien-Aimé, after illicit waters. Or recall, if you will, the two thousand wives of Zinghiz Khan. Remember, from a hundred evidences, that all the passions of these men were on a like turbulent scale ; and estimate the distance to the British paterfamilias, a law-abiding creature in every way, who (according to the Shah's epigram) prefers fifty years with one wife to a hundred years with fifty wives. A poor and sordid comparison enough, you may think, but it measures a distance, the better because no one imputes it to him for a merit ; and a distance you have not thought to measure.

There is another measure far nobler, deeper, less obvious. Its two *termini* are Dante and St Paul. The teaching of St Paul with regard to marriage represents the eternal mind of Christianity : out of it have unfolded all the lilied blossom of Christian wedlock and (by consequence) Christian love. Yet the spirit, the tone, of St Paul concerning marriage (with reverence

be it said) in our modern perspective seems but a little way from that of the heathenesse around him. Doubtless there was a world between them, to the sense of his day; but in the perspective of nineteen hundred years the gulf becomes a crevice. To what silver spirals would climb that spirit which he rooted fast in dogma St Paul could not foresee; and even yet has it put forth its apex-bud? For the Christian love-poets it was left to incarnate the spirit of waxing Christianity in regard to that love which was the effluence of the Pauline counsels. Thus it is that the passage from the first great Christian teacher to Dante is the passage to 'an ampler ether, a diviner air' in the relations of man and woman. And that transition is the measure of a vast insensible spiritualism bathing the very roots of human society.

Along uncounted lines you may follow up, with attentive meditation, this steady working of history towards the higher man, this secret treaty between Nature and her asserted antagonist, asceticism. Constantly obscured, or seemingly contradicted, in historic detail, in particular periods, it becomes arrestingly patent in a large and spatial view. The existing valetudinarianism of our overspent bodies is, I would suggest, a mere stage in the wider beneficent process. But are the iniquitous potencies of the body to be checked by the destruction of all potency?—a question to be asked. It would be a poor world if the ultimate issue were a

mere stagnant virtue, in which morality should luxuriate like duckweed ; if (after the saying of a departed Bishop) we were to put off the old man merely in order that we might put on the old woman. But against that prospect, against a remedy which might justifiably be accounted worse than the disease, comes in another force—the force of sanctity itself. For *holiness energizes*. The commonest of common taunts is that of 'idle monks,' 'lazy saints,' and the like. But most contrary to that superficial taunt, a holy man was never yet an idle man. The process of sanctity, like the Egyptian embalmers, destroys only to preserve the lustiness of the body, and a saintly could never be an effete world.

Let us, again, look back to the basis of Nature. In our times Science has partially brought into daylight the obscure physiology of the will : we know that the will of one man may heal or quicken the body of another. We call it therapeutic hypnotism ; and the long name confers scientific orthodoxy on what was a pestilent heresy. Nor only this : we know, also, the possibility of self-hypnotization ; we know that a man's own will can heal or quicken a man's own self. Are not these the days of 'Christian Science,' and many another over-seeding of this truth ? Solely as a natural matter, by its profound effect on the personality, by its quickening of the will, sanctity (then) would produce a quickening of the body. But that is only the basis, the physical basis of the process. The body (I might say) is

immersed in the soul, as a wick is dipped in oil; and its flame of active energy is increased or diminished by the strength or weakness of the fecundizing soul. But this oil, this soul, is enriched a hundredfold by the infusion of the Holy Spirit; the human will is intensified by union with the Divine Will; and for the flame of human love or active energy is substituted the intenser flame of Divine Love or Divine Energy. Rather, it is not a substitution; but the higher is added to the lower, the lesser augmented by and contained within the greater. The effective energies of the fleshly wick, the body, are correspondingly and immensely augmented. If self-hypnotization have quickening power, how life-giving must be that force when the human is reinforced by the Divine Will, the human soul gathered into the Soul of all being! In such fashion is it that sanctity the destroyer becomes sanctity the preserver; and through the passes of an ascetic death leads even the body, on which its hand has lain so heavy, into a resurrection of power.

This truth is written large over the records of saintliness. The energy of the saints has left everywhere its dents upon the world. When these men, reviled for impotence, have turned their half-disdainful hand to tasks approved by the multitude, they have borne away the palm from the world in its own prized exercises. Take, if you will, poetry. In the facile forefront of lyric sublimity stand the Hebrew prophets: not

only unapproached, but the exemplars to which the greatest endeavour after approach. The highest praise of Milton, Dante, supreme names of Christian secular song, is to have captured spacious echoes of these giants' solitary song. In so far, then, and from one of their aspects, these great poets are derivative ; and could not so have written without their sacred models. Yet the Hebrew prophets wrote without design of adding to the world's poetry, without purpose of poetic fame, intent only on their message (unblessed word, yet ' an excellent good word till it was ill-sorted ') : they thought only of the kingdom of God, and ' all these things were added unto them ' ! Or consider, in another field of human endeavour, St Augustine. Throughout his brilliant youth he was simply a rhetorician of his day ; a dazzling rhetorician, a noted rhetorician, but he produced nothing of permanence, and might have passed from the ken of posterity as completely as the many noted rhetoricians who were his contemporaries. He rose to literary majesty and an authentic immortality only when he rose to sanctity. Yet those works which still defy time were the by-product of an active episcopal life, a life of affairs which would have soaked in the energies of most men. With like incidentalness Francis of Assisi sang his Hymn to the Sun, that other Francis—of Sales—wrote his delightful French prose, John of the Cross poured out those mystical poems which are among the

treasurable things of Spanish literature, and unforgotten prose works besides; all in the leisure hours of lives which had no leisure hours, lives which to most men would have been death.

For holiness not merely energizes, not merely quickens; one might almost say it prolongs life. By its Divine reinforcement of the will and the energies, it wrings from the body the uttermost drop of service; so that, if it can postpone dissolution, it averts age, it secures vital vigour to the last. It prolongs that life of the faculties, without which age is the foreshadow of the coming eclipse. These men, in whom is the indwelling of the Author of life, scarce know the meaning of decrepitude: they are constantly familiar with the suffering, but not the palsy, of mortality. Regard Manning, an unfaltering power, a pauseless energy, till the grave gripped him; yet a 'bag of bones.' That phrase, the reproach of emaciation, is the gibe flung at the saints; but these 'bags of bones' have a vitality which sleek worldlings might envy. St Francis of Assisi is a flame of active love to the end, despite his confessed ill-usage of 'Brother Ass,' despite emaciation, despite ceaseless labour, despite the daily hæmorrhage from his Stigmata. In all these men you witness the same striking spectacle; in all these men, nay, and in all these women. Sex and fragility matter not: these flames burn till the candle is consumed utterly. 'We are always young,' said the Egyptian priests to the Greek emissaries;

and the Saints might repeat the boast, did they not disdain boasting. It was on the instinctive knowledge of this, on the generous confidence they might trust the Creator with His creation, that the Saints based the stern handling of the body which some of them afterwards allowed to have been excessive. For though the oil can immensely energize and prolong the life of the wick, it is on that corporeal wick, after all, that the flame of active energy depends. The fire is conditioned by the fleshly fuel. No energy can replace the substance of energy ; and while some impoverishment is a necessity of ascetic preparation, waste is a costly waste. For, even as a beast of burthen, this sore-spent body is a Golden Ass.

But with all tender and wise allowance (and in these pages I have not been slack of allowance) it remains as it was said : ' He that loseth his life for Me shall find it.' The remedy for modern lassitude of body, for modern weakness of will, is Holiness. There alone is the energizing principle from which the modern world persists in divorcing itself. If ' this body of death ' be, in ways of hitherto undreamed subtlety, a clog upon the spirit, it is no less true that the spirit can lift up the body. In the knowledge of the body's endless interplay with the spirit, of the subtle inter-relations between this father and daughter, this husband and wife, this pair whose bond is at once filial and marital, we have grown paralysingly learned in late days. But our

knowledge is paralysing because it is one-sided. Of the body's reactions and command upon the spirit we know far indeed from all, yet fearfully much. Of the potency, magisterial, benevolent, even tyrannous, which goes forth from the spirit upon the body we have but young knowledge. Nevertheless it is in rapid act of blossoming. Hypnotism, faith-healing, radium—all these, of such seeming multiple divergence, are really concentrating their rays upon a common centre. When that centre is at length divined, we shall have scientific witness, demonstrated certification, to the commerce between body and spirit, the regality of will over matter. To the blind tyranny of flesh upon spirit will then visibly be opposed the serene and sapient awe of spirit upon flesh. Then will lie open the truth which now we can merely point to by plausibilities and fortify by instance : that Sanctity is medicinal, Holiness a healer, from Virtue goes out virtue, in the love of God is more than solely ethical sanity. For the feebleness of a world seeking some maternal hand to which it may cling a wise asceticism is remedial.

Health, I have well-nigh said, is Holiness. What if Holiness be Health ? Two sides of one truth. In their co-ordination and embrace resides the rounded answer. It is that embrace of body and spirit, Seen and Unseen, to which mortality, sagging but pertinacious, unalterably tends.

NOTES

SHELLEY

AFTER he had read this *Shelley* Essay in *The Dublin Review* (July 1908), Mr George Wyndham wrote to the editor of that periodical, Mr Wilfrid Ward, the following letter, afterwards printed as the Introduction to the separate re-publication :

I HAVE read Francis Thompson's *Shelley* more than once to myself, and once aloud. For the moment I will say that it is the most important contribution to pure Letters written in English during the last twenty years. In saying that, I compare this Essay in criticism with Poetry, as well as with other critical Essays.

Speaking from memory, Swinburne's last effective volume, *Astrophel* with *The Nympholept* in it, came out in '87 or '88 ; Browning's *Asolando* in '87. Tennyson's *Œnone* is also, I think, at the verge of my twenty years. But, even so, these were pale autumn blossoms of more radiant springs. It may be, when posterity judges, that Thompson's own poems alone will overthrow this opinion.

In any case there is a strain in a comparison between criticism and poetry ; prose and verse. It is more natural to seek comparison with other essays devoted to the appreciation of poetry. I have a very great regard for Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*, partly reasoned, partly sentimental. But they were earlier. They did not reach such heights. They do not handle subjects, as a rule, so pertinent to Poetry. When they do, in the *Wordsworth* and *Byron* (Second Series), they are outclassed by this Essay. The *Heine* Essay deals with Religion rather than Poetry. The only recent English Essay on Poetry—and, therefore, life temporal and eternal—which challenges comparison, as I read Thompson's *Shelley*, is Myers's *Virgil*, and specially the First Part.

I think those two are the best English Essays on Poetry, of our day. Myers gains by virtue of Virgil's wider appeal

to mortal men in all ages. Thompson gains by virtue of the fact that he is himself a poet, writing on the poet who, in English, appeals specially to poets. His subject is narrower, but his style is incomparable in the very qualities at which Myers aimed; of rhythm and profuse illustration. Both, perhaps, exceeded in these qualities. But Thompson, the poet, is the better man at varying and castigating his prose style. He is rich and melodic, where Myers is, at moments, sweet and ornate. Both are sentimental; and each speaks out of his own sorrow. Myers sorrowed after confirmation of Immortality. Thompson sorrowed out of sheer misery. When Myers writes of Virgil's 'intimations' of Immortality, he is thinking of his own sorrow. When Thompson writes of Mangan's sheer misery, he is thinking of his own Slough of Despond. Both mean to be personally reticent. But Thompson succeeds. Unless I knew Thompson's story, I could not read between the lines of his wailing over Mangan. But anyone who reads Myers sees the blots of *his* tears. Again, Myers is conscious of Virgil as a precursor on the track of unrevealed immortality. Thompson seems—is, I believe—unconscious of any comparison between himself and Shelley, as angels ascending the iridescent ladders of sunlit imagination. He follows the 'Sun-treader' with his eye, unaware that his feet are automatically scaling the Empyrean.

That his article is addressed to Catholics in no way deflects its aim. It begins with an *apologia* for writing on Shelley. It ends with an *apologia* for Shelley. These are but the grey goose-feathers that speed it to the universal heart of man. There it is pinned and quivers.

The older I get, the more do I affect the two extremes of literature. Let me have either pure Poetry, or else the statements of actors and sufferers. Thompson's article, though an Essay in prose criticism, is pure Poetry, and also, unconsciously, a human document of intense suffering. But I won't pity him. He scaled the heavens because he had to sing, and so dropped in a niche above the portals of the temple of Fame. And little enough would he care for that!

Why should he ? Myers doubted. But Thompson knew that souls, not only of poets but of saints, 'beacon from the abode where the eternal are.' He is a meteor exhaled from the miasma of mire ; and all meteors, earth-born and Heaven-fallen, help the Heavens to declare the Glory of God. *Cœli enarrant.* But the grammar of their speech is the large utterance of such men made 'splendid with swords.'

GEORGE WYNDHAM.

Saighton Grange, Chester,
September 16, 1908.

A leading article, entitled 'Poet to Poet,' appearing in *The Observer* (August 1908), said :

NO literary event for years has been so amazing an instance of buried jewels brought to light as the posthumous article by the late Francis Thompson.* *The Dublin Review* has leaped into a second edition with a memorable masterpiece of English prose. Brilliant, joyous, poignant are these pages of interpretation, as sensitive and magical as the mind of one poet ever lent to the genius of another. Yet when we turn from the subject to think of the author, the thing is as mournful as splendid. As for Francis Thompson, whose existence was as fantastic in the true sense as De Quincey's, and far more sorrowful, it is as though fate, even after death, pursued him with paradoxes. In this part of his fame he has no share, and his finest piece of prose—and much of his prose, though unknown to the world, was notable—sets London ringing in a way that reminds us of music never played until found among the papers of a dead composer. There are doubtless many who still ask 'Who was Francis Thompson ? ' There are probably many more who, mistaking knowledge of a poet for familiarity with his name, would do well to ask 'Who was Shelley ? ' The Essay answers

* This essay, offered to *The Dublin Review* when first written in 1889, and then refused, had appeared in its pages nineteen years later, after the death of its author.

both questions equally. As in all the highest work of that kind, its author divines the secrets of another nature by the certainty that his own was akin to it; and sympathy, inspiring true vision, reveals the seer as well as the seen. That the Essay should appear at last, instinct with the first freshness of life—that the expression of the inward glory of a man's youth should become his own rich epitaph—this is perhaps worth all the years of oblivion out of which a masterpiece has been redeemed.

Shortly after he wrote this *Shelley* paper, Francis Thompson set down some 'Stray Thoughts on Shelley,' owning at least a 'correlated greatness' in association with the longer composition. Speaking again of the close relation between the poet and the poetry—that 'sincere effluence of life' which Thompson's own verse ever was—he protests against a writer who had said that Shelley, though himself a wretch, could write as an angel:

Let me put it nakedly: that if Heliogabalus had possessed Shelley's brain, he might have lived the life of Heliogabalus, and yet have written the poetry of Shelley. To those who believe this, there is nothing to say. I will only remark, in passing, that I take it to be the most Tartarian lie which ever spurted on paper from the pen of a good man. For the writer *was* a good man, and had no idea that he was offering a poniard at the heart of truth.

Again, Francis Thompson says:

The difference between the true poet in his poetry and in his letters or personal intercourse, is just the difference between two states of the one man; between the metal live from the forge and the metal chill. But, chill or glowing, the metal is equally itself. If difference there be, it is the metal in glow that is the truer to itself. For, cold, it may be overlaid with dirt, obscured with dust; but afire, all these are scorched away.

The last of these 'Stray Thoughts' carries Shelley with it into the far possibilities of an environment other than that which was his own:

> The coupling of the names of two English poets [Keats and Shelley] who have possessed in largest measure that frail might of sensibility suggests another problem which I should like to put forward, though I cannot answer. What may be the effect of scenic and climatic surroundings on the character and development of genius such as theirs? Had he drunk from the cup of Italy before, not after, the cup of death, how would it have wrought on the passionate sensitiveness of Keats? Would his poetry have changed in kind or power? Cooped in an English city, what would have betided the dewy sensitiveness of Shelley? Could he have created *The Revolt of Islam* had he not risen warm from the lap of the poets' land? Could he have waxed inebriate with the heady choruses of *Prometheus Unbound*,
>
> Like tipsy Joy, that reels with tossing head,
>
> if for the Baths of Caracalla with their 'flowering ruins,' the Italian spring and 'the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication,' had been substituted the blear streets of London, the Avernian birds, the anæmic herbage of our parks, the snivel of our catarrhal May, and the worthless I O U which a sharping English spring annually presents to its confiding creditors? Climate and surroundings must needs influence vital energy; and upon the storage of this fuel, which the imaginative worker burns at a fiercer heat than other workers, depends a poet's sustained power. With waning health, the beauty of Keats's poetry distinctly waned. Nor can it be, but that beings of such susceptibility as these two should transmute their colour, like the Ceylonese lizard, with the shifting colour of their shifted station. I have fancied, at times, a degree of analogy between the wandering sheep Shelley and the Beloved Disciple. Both are usually represented with a certain feminine beauty. Both made the constant burden of their teaching, 'My

little children, love one another.' Both have similarities in their cast of genius. The Son of Man walks amidst the golden candlesticks almost as the profane poet would have seen Him walk :

'His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow ; and His eyes were as a flame of fire ; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ; and His voice as the sound of many waters.'

Receive from Shelley, out of many kindred phantasies, this :

White
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow. . . .
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scatter'd in string.

And, finally, with somewhat the same large elemental vision they take each their stand ; leaning athwart the rampires of creation to watch the bursting of over-seeded worlds, and the mown stars falling behind Time, the scythe-man, in broad swaths along the Milky Way. Now, it is shown that the inspired revelations of the inspired Evangelist are tinged with imagery by the scenery of Patmos. If, instead of looking from Patmos into the eyes of Nature, he had been girt within the walls of a Roman dungeon, might not his eagle have mewed a feather ? We should have had great Apocalyptic prophecy ; should we have had the great Apocalyptic poem ? For the poetical greatness of a Biblical book has no necessary commensuration with its religious importance; Job is greater than Isaiah. Might not even St John have sung less highly, though not less truly, from out the glooms of the Tullianum ? Perhaps so it is ; and, perhaps, one* who hymned the angel Israfel spoke wider truth than he knew :

The ecstasies above
With thy burning measures suit—
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
With the fervour of thy lute—
Well may the stars be mute!

* E. A. Poe.

Yes,[r]Heaven is thine; but this
Is a world of sweets and sours;
Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

HEALTH AND HOLINESS

When first published, this Essay had the following Preface by George Tyrrell.

'IT is dangerous treading here,' says the author (p. 260), 'yet with reverence I adventure.' For whether as a defence, or as a criticism, of the ascetical tradition of Christianity, what he says will perhaps raise objections on this side or on that. Else it were not worth saying. Let it first be clearly noted that he is not dealing with the austerities of sanctity so far as they are inspired by the purely religious and mystical motives of atonement and expiation. His theme is Asceticism, which is to the 'psychic' man, to the passions and desires, what athletics are to the 'physical' man, to the limbs and muscles. It is an instrument or method for the perfecting of our whole nature by the due subjection of the lower to the service of the higher; for the harmonious subordination of the 'psychic' to the 'pneumatic' or spiritual. It is therefore 'for building-up and not for destruction.' In the Saints, the ascetical tendency is frequently complicated with the sacrificial and self-destructive tendency. This latter is a problem apart, a problem for mystics rather than for moralists. But if at times the mystic may transcend, yet he may never transgress the clear dictates of moral reason; and so he too may meditate with profit on these pages. The crippling of Brother Ass is eventually as fatal to the mystical as to the moral life, both of which require the free use of unimpaired faculties.

Midway between an exaggerated pessimistic spiritualism on the one side, and the naïve animalism (against which it is the equally naïve reaction) on the other, stands the Great Physician of soul and body alike, 'with healing on his wings,' the Giver of the meat which perisheth no less than of the meat which endureth. Christian asceticism has ever been in principle and in aim a synthesis, a tempering of contraries.

But if, as an imperishable principle of conduct, asceticism comes more directly under the jurisdiction of divine tradition, yet its application changes with ever changing conditions of life and society, and still more with our growing understanding of the functions of soul and body, and of the precise degree and nature of their interdependence. To adhere rigidly and blindly not merely to the ascetical principles of the Past, but to their old-world applications, were to ignore the bewildering changes that have since swept over the face of society, and to deny all value to the light which has been given us from the Giver of all light through the progress of Physiology and Psychology. An asceticism whose zeal is untempered by such knowledge may easily defeat itself by inducing those very same nervous and mental disorders which proverbially dog the heels of indulgence, and whose root in both cases is to be found in the violation of the due balance of sense and spirit. On the other hand, the laws of perfect hygiene, the culture of the *corpus sanum*, not for its own sake, but as the pliant, durable instrument of the soul, are found more and more to demand such a degree of persevering self-restraint and self-resistance as constitutes an ascesis, a mortification, no less severe than that enjoined by the most rigorous masters of the spiritual life.

In these pages the thoughts of many hearts are revealed in speech that is within the faculty of few, but within the understanding of all. They are an expression of fallible opinion, not of infallible dogma. Mistakes there may be, but, as the author says, ' The mistake of personal speculation is after all merely a mistake, and no one will impute it to authority.'

G. TYRRELL.

Richmond, Yorks.

To F.P. and C.W. gratitude for their assistance in the reading of the proofs.

W.M.

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